

ALL STAR★NEIL R. JONES★ROSS ROCKLYNNE★A. W. BERNAL  
ISSUE

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BACK  
COVER

75¢

APRIL 20c

# AMAZING STORIES

A DEAD CITY AWAKES  
IN

## LORDS OF THE UNDERWORLD

by L. TAYLOR HANSEN



AMAZING STORIES

VOLUME 15  
NUMBER 4

APRIL  
1941

**Joe!...in the HOSPITAL?...**

**why, he only had the sniffles when  
we went dancing Saturday!**



You have probably known several cases like that . . . the medical records report lots of them. And they all lead up to this warning:

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**APRIL  
1941**

**VOLUME 15  
NUMBER 4**

# **AMAZING STORIES**

TRADE MARK REGISTERED

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Front cover painting by J. Allen St. John, illustrating a scene from **Lords Of The Underworld**

Back cover painting by Frank R. Paul, depicting **A City On Uranus**

Illustrations by J. Allen St. John, Julian S. Krupa, Robert Fuqua, Jay Jackson, Joe Sewell, Dick Shaw, R. Newman, Guy Gifford

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AMAZING  
STORIES  
APRIL  
1941

Published monthly by ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY at 608 South Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill. New York Office, 381 Fourth Avenue, New York City. Entered as second class matter October 6, 1938, at the Post Office, Chicago, Illinois under the act of March 3rd, 1879. Subscription \$2.40 a year (12 issues); Canada \$2.90; Foreign \$3.40.

Volume XV  
Number 4



**IF** you're that man, here's something that will interest you.

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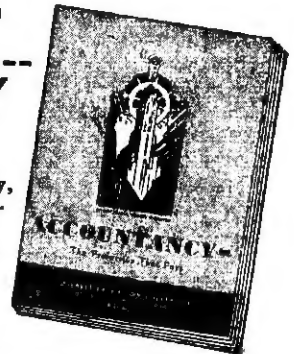
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# The OBSERVATORY

by THE Editor

**T**HERE'S a great day coming! And that's not the name of a song; it's just a plain statement of fact. There is a great day coming, and it's March 10. On that date you can go to your newsstand and get the finest, biggest, most sensational issue of *AMAZING STORIES* ever placed in the hands of lovers of science fiction! On March 10 we celebrate our 15th birthday! Fifteen long years of continuous publication. First in the field, and still leading that field in every department. Not for nothing does *AMAZING STORIES* hold the title—given it by its many readers—of “The Aristocrat of Science Fiction.”

Now the “Aristocrat” will don “Royal Purple” for the giant May issue. It will make any past issue fade into the background for sheer quality, value, and quantity.

You'll find all of the details on page 132, but we'll touch on a few points here anyway.

**S**INCE March, 1926, when the April issue, Volume 1, Number 1, went on sale, *AMAZING STORIES* has gone on, continuing publication even through the darkest depression days, and today, not only does it hold the reputation of being the oldest in the field, but the best.

Now, this birthday issue reaches a new pinnacle. Just imagine it! 240 pages; a new type size, especially for this issue, to allow for publication of two complete novels and three short novels in addition to our regular fare of novelets and short stories; a special cover painted by the masterful J. Allen St. John; a back cover painting that is the result of a special plea to Frank R. Paul (who is also celebrating his 15th birthday with *AMAZING STORIES*) to do the best work of his sparkling career; and a total of 162,000

words (nearly three times the usual wordage of a regular issue) of the finest fiction and feature articles obtainable. And for only five cents more!

**W**HEN we announced to the writing world that we were planning something big for our birthday party, two writers came to us and by some strange coincidence said almost the same words: “I am now finishing the finest story I have ever done, and this is the spot for it. It's a complete novel.”

Well, your editor thinks they were right, and we know you'll agree when you read these two novels

in the May Birthday Issue. The two authors who came to us were none other than our two zooming favorites, Don Wilcox and David Wright O'Brien.

**B**UT enough of our birthday; we've got a few words to say about *this* issue, which we think is the finest treat of the year, so far. We have brought back no less than four old favorites in one issue!

L. Taylor Hansen is the most famous of them all. In October, 1930, *AMAZING STORIES* featured his “The Prince of Liars” in the same issue with the famous “Skylark Three” of Edward

E. Smith, Ph.D. With such competition, it is notable that this story has been remembered for ten long years.

Well, he's back again, with an even finer tale this month. Don't fail to read it.

**A**NOTHER returning star is A. W. Bernal, with a sequel to “Paul Revere And The Time Machine.” Still a third is the much-requested

(Continued on page 47)



"Admiral, come quick! We've reached the South Pole!"

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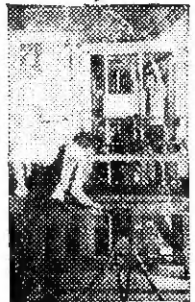
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Here at my school in Chicago, the world's Electrical Center, you can get 12 weeks Shop Training in **ELECTRICITY** and an extra 4 weeks Course in Radio that can help give you your start towards a better job.

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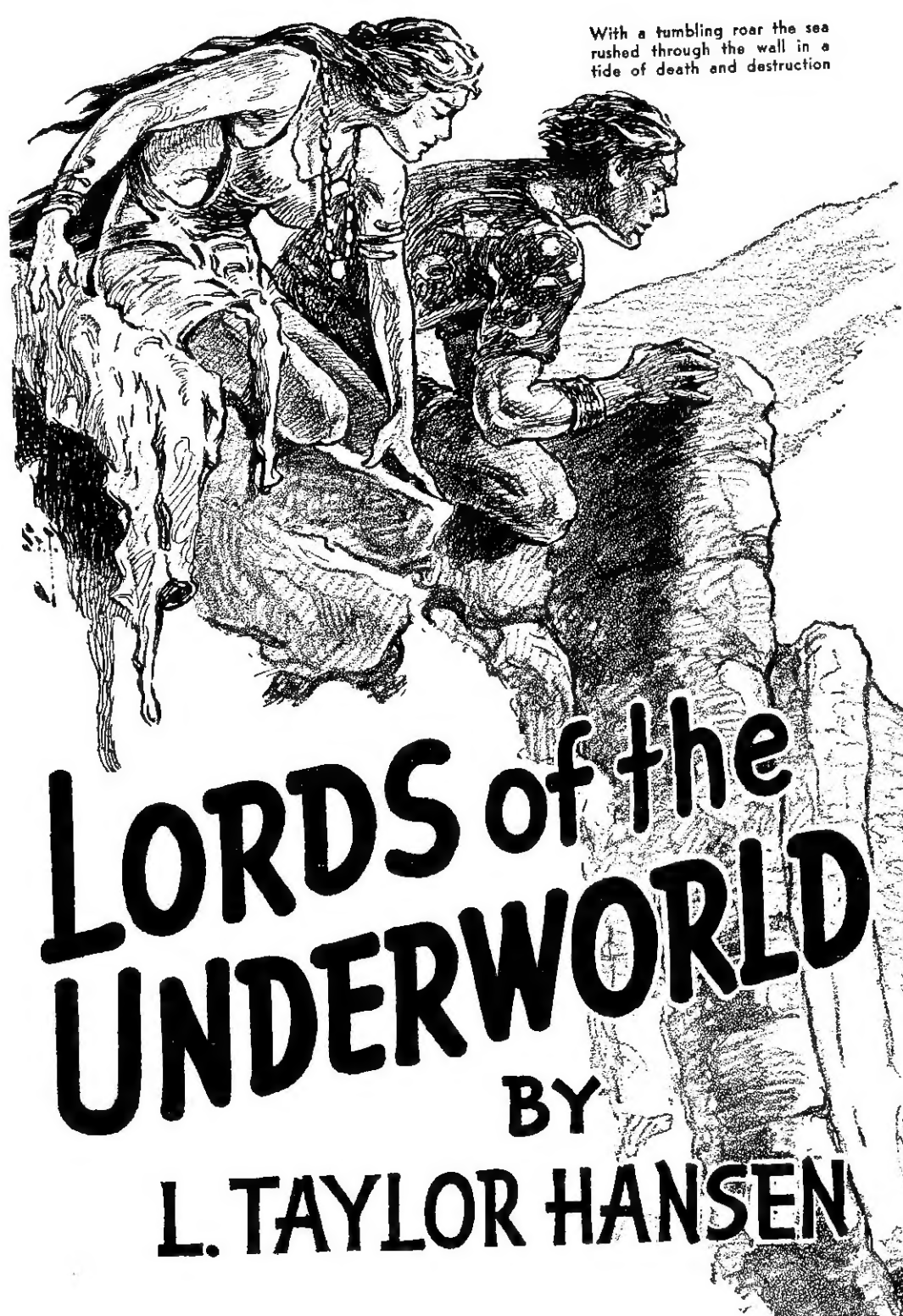
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With a tumbling roar the sea  
rushed through the wall in a  
tide of death and destruction

# LORDS of the UNDERWORLD

BY  
L. TAYLOR HANSEN

**D**ON snorted with exasperation as he turned to me.

"You're a fine pal! We bring you out here into the desert because you are a budding archaeologist. We even build up a climax. We climb these cliffs! We exclaim over the magnificent view of the desert! And we end by pointing to those enormous stone tablets, probably thousands and possibly tens of thousands of years old, carved with the symbols of some unknown script! And what do you do? You develop a toothache!"

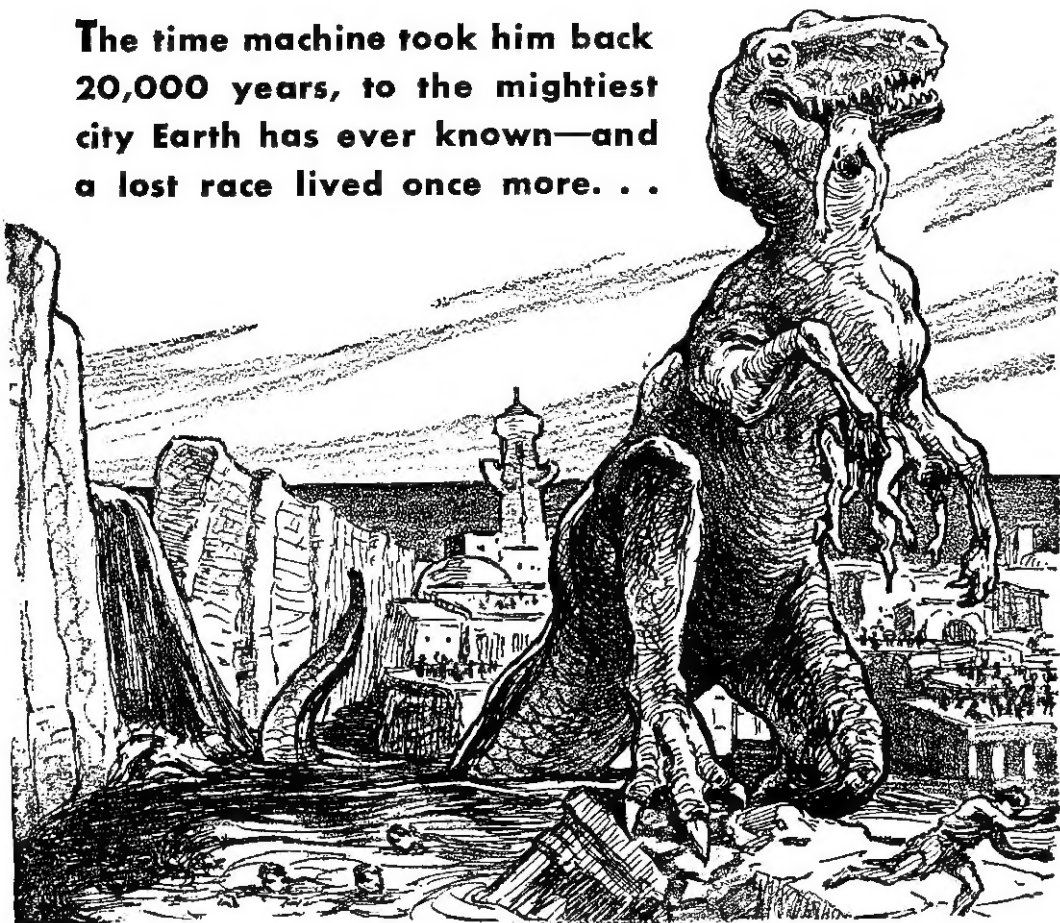
"You're right fellows. Perhaps I am being a baby. I realize that I am spoiling your fun—and mine. Tonight in Indio, I intend to find a dentist and

have this useless piece of my anatomy yanked out. In the mean time, I will talk archaeology."

I smiled wryly, wishing in vain for something to knock the pounding ache in my jaw, but my eyes could not help but notice the beauty of the sunken valley below us. From the high vantage point to which we had climbed, the sunset view was magnificent. The ochre and mauve of the desert with shadows of purple-blue, blended to the golden mirror of the dead lake split by its lava islands.

"But it seems to me, that standing here as we are, upon an ancient sea-cliff, it is up to the geologist to give us the setting first," I added.

**The time machine took him back 20,000 years, to the mightiest city Earth has ever known—and a lost race lived once more. . .**



"And quite right." Chuck smiled. "To begin with, this is not a true desert. It is the arm of an ancient sea. At one time this was part of the Gulf of California—and not so many thousand years ago either! There is evidence here that during the time of man there has been considerable elevation of the terrain. For example, we are standing upon travertine-covered cliffs—the result of sea water drying under a hot sun, splashing and drying again, as innumerable waves dashed against the rocks. Yet, if you will notice, we came up here by way of huge fish traps—artificial pools . . ."

"Wait a moment there!" Don interrupted eagerly. "Don't forget that the Colorado overflowed very recently and greatly enlarged the old, dead lake left behind by the retreating Gulf."

"But the lake thus created would not have tides, and the fish traps mean incoming and outgoing tides!"

Don snapped his fingers and laughed.

"Then this land has been raised considerably. Just how much?" I asked.

"Twelve feet above the present sea level for the terrace we are standing upon."

"But these tablets are covered with travertine *over* the writing!"

"Which means?" Chuck asked.

"That they are probably older than the Sphinx of Gizeh. It also means that I am going to copy them if we stay here all night."

"Can you recognize any of the symbols?" Don asked.

"Yes and no. They belong to that unknown type of inscriptions found by various explorers throughout the Americas. Evidently all are of the same tongue and that is of great antiquity. It strongly resembles the so-called 'stick writing' of Ireland and other locales of the Megalithic builders."

"I may be a bit stupid," Don inter-

rupted, "but if the script is ancient Irish, what were the Irish doing here in America?"

"That is what I came here to find out; that is why I must have a copy of this writing!" I said. "Perhaps several copies would not be amiss. I can then compare them for accuracy, as so much of it is almost obliterated. Therefore, everyone get out a pencil, notebook, love-letter or whatever you have—and get busy."

"I know of a better way," Don smiled, "Just photograph the tablets."

"In this light?"

"Of course not. But in the morning, when the light has just the right slant, you will be amazed how the marks stand out. Therefore we go to Indio for the night and return in the morning."

THUS I was induced to leave, but once in the car, I remembered my tooth. The conversation came to me in snatches through the red barrier of pain.

". . . and my grandfather used to tell of these old miners who reported seeing an ancient ship with totally rotten hull. It was half-buried in the sand dunes which the overflow of the Colorado covered when it refilled the shrunken Salton Sea."

Don snorted.

"That vision was probably the result of whiskey and the desert sun!"

"Wish I had some. I'd take a ride in the ship!" I snapped.

"We might be able to fulfill that wish," Chuck smiled, "for I understand our promising young physicist Don, has started drawing up plans for a time-machine. That should put you on the ship without the aid of the whiskey."

"Maybe it would," Don said, suddenly serious. "Then you could take a ride back to Erin and meet the ancient Irish . . . but wait! Unless my phil-

ology has betrayed me, that sign across the street reads: 'DENTIST'."

Thus it happened that scarcely fifteen minutes later found me sitting in a dentist chair, while my two companions formed an interested audience.

"Now if you will just relax and breathe deeply of this. . . ."

"No, not ether! It nauseates me, and I want to be in good condition for . . ."

"Sorry, but I have no local. I have been expecting a supply today, but something must have delayed shipment."

"That's all right Doc. Go right ahead. We'll hold him." Don volunteered, nodding to Chuck.

"No . . . I . . . ."

But the gagging stuff was over my face and willing hands held me down. After a dizzy moment, I felt myself sinking into a gulf of darkness through which someone's snicker and the ticking of a clock became the only sounds. The snicker grew to a roar while the ticking lengthened to long gong-like strokes heard through an immeasurable void . . .

However, my worry was entirely useless. Almost immediately I opened my eyes upon my impatient audience, with one difference. The tooth was gone—and with it the ache. I scarcely allowed the dentist to properly doctor my jaw, so anxious was I to get away from the memory of the offending tooth.

When again in the car, Don surprised us by his proposal to spend the night at his own cottage.

"This is a mighty pleasant idea," Chuck commented, "and I was prepared for some kind of a surprise by Don—but not this."

"Remember the time he pulled an uncle out of his hat when we went fishing on Great Bear Lake?" I said laughing at the recollection. "And how sur-

prised the uncle was when the four starving beggars piled into his little summer cabin?"

"This time, however, I have a bigger surprise. In this little shack, I have actually tried out my hand at a time-machine. Of course it won't work. Still, I have had the fun of making it."

"Want a willing subject?" Chuck volunteered.

"I tell you it won't work. Besides, atmospheric conditions are not favorable."

"We shall put our collective brains to work on the thing," I smiled with finality. "Then when it is ready, I shall go."

"You'll do nothing of the kind," Chuck snapped back. "I spoke first."

"Until I can get a cat back, no one is going."

"You actually sent out a cat?" I asked, with increasing interest.

"Yes, but it died during the experiment."

"From old age, no doubt." Chuck nodded, as Don turned off the highway, and after following a sand road for some distance, drew up before a little desert bungalow. Above it, in the bright moonlight, stretched the line of travertine cliffs.

"Why didn't you tell us that you had a cute little place like this for us to stay, when you proposed that photography expedition in the morning?" I asked.

"It isn't so much. I built it for my mom when her health broke. After she died, I grew to hate it. That is why. It is all right to experiment with fool ideas, but not as a place to live."

"I wouldn't mind it all all." I commented getting out and breathing deeply of the cool night air. "The desert fascinates me. It is so immeasurable and so changeable."

"And lonesome." Don added as he

led the way to the bungalow. "And late at night, like this, it's even worse."

AFTER opening the door with some difficulty, Don held a match to show us what appeared to be a fireplace with wood piled to one side. We went to work building a fire while he hunted up an old and dusty kerosene lamp. After due time, we had the place very liveable. In our tour of inspection, aided by the lamp, Don pointed out a small but useful scientific library, and a makeshift laboratory. It was none of these things, however, that held my attention. It was the curious, throne-like chair in one corner. As if prodded by one impulse, the three of us walked toward it.

"Of course, I cannot offer nine lives . . ." Chuck began.

"Hold on there!" I interrupted. "It seems to me that I have prior claim."

"How's that?"

"I have a mission. Quite a definite mission. It has something to do with the Irish. If anyone rides that old ship . . ."

"Now listen, you two!" Don snorted. "I put the motion before the house that we throw our blankets on the floor and forget the time-machine until we have photographed the tablets."

The motion was carried, my vote being ruled out because of undue prejudice, and so we set about trying to make a suitable bed. Mine was the most impossible conglomeration of overcoat, hard floor and auto cushion I have ever tried to sleep upon. After about a half hour, conversation was ruled out, and my companions fell asleep. But sleep would not come to me. My jaw ached. And my mind still toyed with the idea of that time-machine.

Finally I sat up. My friends were asleep. I decided to have a close look

at the thing. A mere examination wouldn't hurt. Quietly as a thief, I crept past the sleeping forms outlined dimly by the dying firelight. Striking a match, I relit the lamp.

With the aid of the lamp I examined the wires leading to the contraption and the row of batteries to which they were attached. Suppose I did try it out. I couldn't sleep anyhow. Why not spend the night traveling through time? For a moment, I hesitated over the dials, and then the temptation became too strong. I determined to go.

I opened the drawer of Don's desk in search of a pencil to scribble him a note. Before me lay a small revolver. On the back of some physics notes, I wrote the following:

"Sorry, but when I told the devil to get behind me—he pushed. In case I don't get back, this note should prove to the authorities that I committed suicide. (I borrowed your revolver, in case the Irish prove to be too unreasonable.)  
Henry."

I propped up the note where the boys would find it, and after making certain the revolver was loaded, I strapped it around my waist under my shirt, and climbed into the weird contraption. Then setting the dials for five thousand years into the past, I turned on the switch and closed my eyes.

I was jerked upward as the machine seemed to go into a tailspin. Dizzy and somewhat sick, I heard the plunging roar of water in the distance. It was as if I was being borne down a river toward a thundering waterfall. The sound came toward me with unbelievable rapidity. Then suddenly I was in it . . . and it *was* water! Churning torrents fell over my head until I felt that unfathomable tons had covered me and cut off my breath, and with it, memory and finally life itself slipped away . . .

## CHAPTER II

## Into the Past

SOMEONE was shaking me. I opened my eyes. I was lying on the rocky shore of a large bay. Within a few feet, the waves were pounding. A foot pushed me. It was a sandaled foot—the high-backed sandal of the ancients. I followed the bare leg up to the short tunic over which was fitted a suit of bronze armor.

The face above the armor had no neck. It was set squarely upon the burly shoulders with a matted red beard hiding all features below the squinting blue eyes and the merry little button of a nose. On the loose red hair was a high bronze helmet crested with the symbol of the double axe. The stubby fingers gripped the handle of a knife whose leather holster was thrust through the belt. Yet the quizzical, almost merry twinkle of the eyes betrayed the fingers.

Slowly I sat up, rubbing my stiff arms and smiling my good intentions. Then it was that I noticed he was not alone. Eight other men were gathered around me, a pace or two back. Some were clad as the one who had prodded me. Others were dressed in a kilt-like tunic over which they wore a wide-sleeved coat. Most of them had dark hair and one was dark-skinned. Two had a mass of deep auburn curls.

One of these chaps, a fellow of about my own age, held a dripping olla which he had evidently just emptied over my face. They were all watching me—some leaning on spears and others apparently unarmed.

I glanced toward the bay once more. Was this the desert of last night? Out where the roadway should have joined the paved boulevard, a ship was riding—an ancient vessel with curved prow

—not over fifty feet in length. I rubbed my eyes and looked again. They were all still there—even to the ship.

I reached out to touch the sandaled foot. I felt I must test its reality. But my movement was misunderstood by a long-nosed man who immediately raised a bronze spear with the business end pointed at me.

Red-beard knocked it up. Then he laughed. I joined him and after a moment, the others joined in. The laugh broke the tension.

After he had sobered down, the rough old pirate with the red beard and merry blue eyes, who was evidently the leader, put some kind of question to me in an unknown tongue.

"I'm sorry Irishman, but I can't even speak modern Gaelic. I can foresee a difficult time, what with you talking a dead language and mine not as yet even dreamt of. On the whole, therefore, your band has the advantage in this impossible situation. You can converse together."

The effect of my words was as if I had tossed a bomb among them. Excitedly they conferred together. In amazement, they again looked at me and commented about my clothes. The fact that I had no beard was evidently a subject of debate. That point, at least, could be easily settled. I began to search my pockets for my safety razor. Then just as I was about to give up in despair, I found it in my vest.

SMILING blandly, I got up on my feet and held it out to Red-beard. Then in my best actor's manner, I proceeded to shave. Red-beard snatched the razor from my hand and drew it along his hairy arm. Cries of astonishment and admiration went up from his cut-throat crew as the red fuzz rolled up before the shining edge.

"After you use it once Red-beard, I'll

start raising whiskers." I smiled, bowing gallantly and motioning it toward him.

He bowed deeply in acknowledgment of the complimentary tones, and the interesting present which they gave him.

"You know, Red-beard, I have been a very stupid fool," I continued in my most gracious manner, "for I started out for your century in a time-machine which a stupid friend built below the water of the lake upon whose *shore* I expected to land. Therefore admitting that I didn't discover his mistake in time, I made one on my own score. I should have brought along some silly little trinkets which an old pirate like you would value more than gold. For example, why didn't I bring along that lead pencil?"

Red-beard received this long speech in puzzled silence, while the rest of the men looked at each other, repeating this word or that. It was obvious that they were trying to fit my sounds into their knowledge of languages.

"It's no use," I advised them. "We have forgotten your language and you won't understand mine for some five thousand years."

But Red-beard was not pondering philology. I was afraid that by the way he was eyeing me, he was weighing in his mind the various advantages of turning me either into a deck-hand or a corpse. I decided to argue the point with him.

"Why not take me along?" pointing to the ship. "I am willing to work," flexing my arms, "and besides," pointing to the razor, and then to the point of his companion's spear, "my metal is better than yours."

This bit of advice he well understood for he smiled back at me shrewdly. Then making a circling movement with his hands, he pointed to me questioningly.

"So you want to know if I come from around here. Now that is a more complicated question than you imagine. If I should explain that I motored here yesterday in a shiny black metal monster which is fed with something taken out of the ground, you would, naturally, either run the spear through me, or keep me as Exhibit A for the Prehistoric Liars Club. If I say 'Yes' I must be a Paiute or from a related tribe. Therefore I must say 'No!'" with vigorous headwagging.

Apparently satisfied with this answer, Red-beard picked up a stick and pulled me over to some wet sand.

"So you want me to draw a picture of my country? That is also a complicated problem. Should I sketch Ireland for grandpa Dennis? Or Germany for that other grandma who had a Von in her maiden name before she traded it for the love of an English student?" Then accepting the stick, I drew a crude map of Europe and made a general sweep over the western part.

For a moment Red-beard eyed me skeptically, and then a sudden light dawned in his eyes. Taking the stick, he touched at several points in Europe and then looked at me inquiringly.

"Excellent! You have made me an extensive traveler. Perhaps you are right, but the dimension would amaze you. Yes! I am an extensive traveler! Now will you take me?"

HE stood up and clapped both hands on my shoulders, shaking me like a big, friendly bear. Then he turned away but I caught his sleeve.

"Not so fast. I came here just to ask you some questions and I won't be cheated out of the opportunity." I thrust the stick into his hand and pointed to our map.

He erased out the map of Europe with his sandal and sketched the two

Americas. Pointing to his ship, he touched the extended Gulf of California and looked at me. I nodded. Then realizing that I fully understood him, he trailed the stick out of the Gulf, down the coast, past the equator and came to rest upon the coast of South America.

"You are a Chimu!" I exclaimed in consternation. "You belong to that legendary people who sailed down the coast in seagoing ships, and disembarking from their fleet, built the city of Chan-Chan! In what century then did the waters pour over my time-machine and cast me adrift—a wrecked mariner who can never return? Certainly more than five thousand years!"

I glanced down at the rocks upon which we were standing. They were covered with the same travertine which encased them yesterday at sunset when . . . . . Still the same cloak of rough travertine, only now the cloak was thinner—less impenetrable. How ancient then were the tablets we had discovered yesterday—or was it yesterday, or 20,000 years ago?

Red-beard broke my reverie by motioning for me to follow him, and turned toward the ship. Without a word, the crew fell in behind us. Was I being accepted as a friend? Or was I a prisoner? Probably a little of both. They had failed to search me, probably due to the fact that weapons in their world were not easily concealed.

Two canoes which they had dragged upon the rocks took us out to the ship. I found her to be an eminently seaworthy craft with rough hewn planks and tar-caulked seams. A small shelter at one end acted as a hold in which were stored dried fruits and water jars. A square sail and oars completed the equipment. Almost as soon as the canoes were pulled aboard, the sail was hoisted and we were on our way south.

In the weeks which followed, Red-beard must have often regretted his good natured decision to take me along. It took me some time to harden up to my oar, while I often misunderstood what was expected of me. Yet, in spite of his explosive temper, I was certain that the old pirate's tolerance had on several occasions, prevented the crew from conveniently disposing of me.

Be that as it may, the sun each day rose hotter and passed at noon more directly overhead, while the shores which drifted by became more and more tropical. Sometimes we ran into schools of fish, and on such occasions we would stop sailing and draw in our nets. At other times we would go into the jungles for spring water, and perhaps fresh meat. I was never given any opportunities to shoot, because, though I had been presented with a bow and arrow, as well as a spear, my attempts to manage these weapons had caused such roars of laughter that the game got away. After that, I was left to practice on the beach.

Once we ran into a storm. It was a wild day, yet at no time did the crew seem to be unduly excited. During that crisis, each and every man earned my profound respect for his skill as a unit of a perfect team in which each unit was a skilled navigator. We matched the mountainous seas with superb judgment, and though we were tossed about like a toy, yet we managed to right ourselves again and meet the next wall of thundering foam.

However, the crew which had seemed so calm and self-assured during those breathless moments when one mountain of emerald gray after another rushed upon us, became highly perturbed when once more we hugged the shore. From somewhere behind those obscuring rocks and trees, drums were throbbing. It was evident to me that those drums

were carrying a message of some kind—a message which caused the men to stare at each other in consternation and fear.

I HAD improved my time upon the long months of the voyage, learning the Chimu tongue. It was not what they called themselves. The word Chimu seemed to mean "king" or carry connotations of grandeur. Their name for their city was pronounced Kahn-Kahn which was at once reminiscent of the monarchs of Cathay. And like them, these men revered the dragon or snake. They told me it stood for the sea. Was not the sea also a green and undulating creature of many moods?

As we sailed on, the drums became more insistent. But to my inquiries the same answer was always given: "Bad news. Very bad."

That this was true, was evident. Up to now, we had sailed freely and joyously. Now we began to hide. We sailed by night. We sought coves in the daytime and we whispered while near the shore. I could no longer doubt that these men who had befriended me were afraid—afraid of something abroad in that forest.

Finally I decided to have a showdown with Red-beard, but Curly I (my name for the auburn-haired brothers was Curly I and Curly II) shook his head in the negative. Curly I had become more and more friendly since I taught him some diving and swimming tricks and a few wrestling holds. (So far, my gymnasium work was the only college subject which had helped me.)

"Now listen, Curly I," I insisted in my halting Chimu, "I want to know why we are hiding. If I am to be one of the crew, why not make me one? If I am a prisoner—then treat me like a prisoner. But at least tell me what those drums are saying."

"They are telling bad news."

"So Red-beard himself informed me. But what news?"

He signaled me not to talk on the deck, but that day on the beach, as the ship was riding in a hidden cove, and we crept through the forest for water, he asked:

"You cannot understand those drums?" making a significant circling movement with his hand. They were throbbing through the forest as usual.

"If I did, would I be asking for information?" I snapped.

He gave a thoughtful nod, and then asked shrewdly:

"Where is Xibalba?"

"Never heard of it."

He looked at me in amazement.

"You have never heard of Xibalba? You don't know THE LORDS OF THE UNDERWORLD?"

"No."

"But the fame of the crown city has spread through the sunset and sunrise seas where it is known by many names, according to their language!"

I was speaking the truth. Though the name had a ring of familiarity, yet I could not place it in my mind, in spite of the fact that I was trying my best to recall the main points of archeological interest in both North and South America, as well as all of their local names.

"No. Perhaps it is the name. Here is a stick and there is some wet sand. Show me where it lies from Chan-Chan."

He took the stick and drew the coast line of western South America. Then placing a circle at Chan-Chan, he looked at me inquiringly. I nodded. Then mentally counting distance, he drew a large lake which I immediately recognized as Lake Titicaca. As he saw me nod, he made a circling movement around the lake.

"There lies Xibalba."

"Tiahuanaco!" I exclaimed in enthusiasm, using English subconsciously. "The Pre-Incan city of Tiahuanaco whose uncovered mounds in 1940 capture the most stolid scientific imagination! So Tiahuanaco is Xibalba!"

AND then as he stared at me suspiciously because of the undisguised enthusiasm in my voice, I asked in my halting Chimu:

"Why should Chan-Chan fear Xibalba?"

Again he looked at me in amazed surprise.

"Because they are our enemies," he answered simply.

"Yes, but why?" I persisted. "Do your nations covet the same land? Or are they fundamentally of a different race? And if so, which one of you came here first—and from where?"

"We are different. The Xibalbans are small and dark-complected. They have always lived here—from time immemorial. Many generations ago, because of tribal wars in our homeland, we set out in our fleet of ships and settled here. We conquered the Xibalbans and married the women."

"The old, old story," I murmured. "The Ionians, Dorians and Corinthians conquered the Megalithic Cretans or Pelasgians and formed the Greeks of the Golden Age."

"What do you mean by Megalithic?"

"It is a word we have made up of two Greek words—mega meaning huge, and lithos meaning stone. The Xibalbans build their walls with giant rocks, do they not?"

"Yes. Many are as large as houses."

And then in an attempt to forestall other questions concerning peoples I had inadvertently mentioned, I asked:

"Would it be possible for us to go to Xibalba?"

His eyes widened in horror.

"If you make such a proposal, Red-beard would have you killed!"

"Yes, I suppose so." I conceded with apparent resignation. But in the back of my mind, a determination was slowly taking shape.

### CHAPTER III

#### Southward—to Adventure

AS our ship proceeded on its way south, our movements became more and more wary. We sought better and better hiding places on the coast. Finally the night came, when rounding a promontory, we saw what seemed to be the entire heavens on fire. All night the destructive reflection had been growing in size and intensity as the men seized their oars and rowed vigorously to hasten the speed at which our sail was carrying us. Then suddenly we rounded another point and came into view of a clearing of cultivated fields. From here, as the hellish glare lighted the country, I saw a vast and teeming city being sacked.

The men around me slumped at their oars and burst into low wails of anguish. So that was Chan-Chan! The city of the Chimus from the glorious palace of the sunken gardens, to the great quays, was being over-run and burned by a victorious army!

Thousands battled upon the wide, white walls freakishly lighted by the burning towers and flaming parks of the city, while many fell upon the hordes below. Hundreds struggled upon the wide quays with knives, spears and huge battle-axes—the crash of metal on metal intermingling with the cries of the vanquished. It was ghastly.

I looked around for Red-beard. He was standing on the prow, arms folded, a profound anguish in his eyes. I

touched his arm. He glanced at me impatiently.

"Would you listen in this moment of trial to a stranger who wants to be a friend? I know how you feel about all this. If however, there is one man in Xibalba who is responsible, and you can get me into the city, I will kill that man and take my chances in getting out again."

He gave a short, contemptuous laugh and waved me away. But I persisted.

"If I look like a Xibalban, then you would no doubt be afraid to take chances." I argued. "But unless I am mistaken, the Xibalbans are small and dark with deep-sunken eyes and wavy brown hair, are they not?"

He nodded, but continued to stare at the burning city.

"Then I am not a Xibalban. Besides, I have this." I added tapping my gun. "I told you it was a charm, but I lied. It is a weapon. A powerful fighting weapon which throws lightning and kills at a great distance."

Amused unbelief played in a smile around the corners of his lips while he patted my arm as one might an excited but annoying child.

"If you want a demonstration, you shall have one. Pick out the man and I shall kill him before you can count ten. However, remember this—that I have five shots. Only five. I want three for myself in order to fight my way out of Xibalba. I give you two. One for the man you wish to kill—and one for a demonstration . . . if you still insist upon such an expensive demonstration."

He looked at me in surprise. I had withdrawn the revolver and pulled back the safety catch. As I waited for him to speak, I stared at him, and he sensed for the first time the deadly earnestness of my words. A new respect half-composed of a strange, superstitious fear

crept into his eyes as he lowered them from mine to my small weapon. For a few moments he hesitated, evidently debating with himself, and then suddenly he smiled at me warmly, and called the crew.

Briefly he motioned for me to tell them what I had told him. In repeating my story I was aware that they were regarding me with awe-struck eyes. I understood why, when one of the crew, whom I had nick-named "Long-nose" for an obvious reason, stood up and addressed the men.

"It is written that such a man—a stranger—would come to us in our hour of need, and that this stranger with the help of the gods, would single-handed, vanquish the LORDS OF THE UNDERWORLD. This man whom we found alone and friendless upon the beach of the inland sea, must be that stranger!"

"But no, you are mistaken!" Curly II protested. "This stranger who is to come will be twins, for it is written that he will be a double."

"And so he is!" my friend Curly I snapped back proudly. "The weapon which he holds in his hand is the mysterious double!"

During the debate, we were drifting nearer and nearer the carnage. Bodies and bits of wreckage floated around us. In the beleaguered city, the battle raged as fiercely as ever, though it seemed to me that the defenders were rallying somewhat and almost holding their own.

Red-beard tapped my arm and asked to examine the gun. I shook my head, warning him that as I had been clumsy in my efforts to manage his weapons, so would he be with mine. The only difference was that mine was dangerous. He understood readily, and therefore, did not press the point, but was content to touch the metal while it lay in my hand, as one might caress a rat-

tlar. Then satisfied, he motioned for me to return it to its holster.

Turning again toward the men, Red-beard took a few steps away from me, and I felt instinctively that he wanted to talk to them alone. Therefore I walked back to the prow.

**A**FTER a moment Red-beard came to me and said:

"We have decided to allow you to undertake this dangerous mission of revenge. If you are able to kill the High-Priest of the Xibalbans, we shall rebuild our city and make you our leader in appreciation for your bravery. We can give you but little help.

"However, there is a woman, a Chimu princess, who is studying from certain famous tutors in the Xibalban capitol. We will contact her in some fashion, and see that she gives you all the help it is in her power to give. And now, we send out some of our men to obtain suitable clothes for our adventure."

"Thank you, my friends. I promise to kill this High-Priest or die in the attempt."

At the sound of my voice, they rose, eyes shining, and each man gripped my hands in warm gratitude. Then dropping beside their oars, they pulled into the comparatively quiet waters of the opposite shore. There, three of them, fastening ugly looking obsidian knives into their belts, lowered themselves into one of our canoes and paddled quickly away into the darkness.

For endless hours, it seemed, we waited for their return, while the horror of battle raged under the burning towers of the city. Now the wooden framework of an enormous pyramid behind the city had caught fire and was blazing like a huge torch, until, suddenly collapsing, it carried both besieger and defender alike into the in-

ferno of its molochian jaws.

Then when we had almost forgotten to expect our men, we heard their low voices calling from under our stern. Willing hands immediately pulled them up while their canoe came next. They had various types of clothes for us. Though no expert on the subject, these did not appear to me to be particularly Amerind. For example, there was not a single feather-work mantle, of which the western civilizations were so fond.

"Which particular city are they from—Knossos? Babylon? Hattusas?" I asked Red-beard.

"You should know better than I. It was a ship from a nation of the great inland sea."

I accepted the rebuke, but it did not help me in determining the century in which I had landed. Now if there had been some Egyptian clothes in the chests, I might not have been so completely at sea on the matter. But in this hodge-podge of clothes, there probably was not an entire outfit from any one country, but merely a mass of clothing curios, as it were.

I chose an Assyrian robe, but Red-beard immediately shook his head and tossed me a Celtic-looking kilt-like tunic and a horned helmet.

Some of the men were busy dressing in the new clothes, having thrown their own into the sea. But that wasn't what surprised me. It was the sight of my friends, the "Curly" brothers, combing dye into their hair, while "Long Nose" was doing the same with the flaming beard and hair of the leader. If I had not watched the process of change, I would not have recognized these erstwhile wild-looking white men.

I laughed and pointed to the carrot shade in my now full-sized beard. Red-beard shook his head.

"No. You are our prisoner. We

made you a prisoner in our journey through the northern part of the other side of the sun-rise sea. We are traders from the great inland sea. We have objects to trade to the Xibalbans. However, they will not care for our trinkets. They will be interested in you.

"The young monarch, no doubt, will try to obtain you for a favored slave from whom he may extract interesting information on a little-known and rapidly changing world. He is a well-read man. However, should the priesthood desire you for their own dark ends, he will have to give you up. Whatever happens, you must not speak our language. That is our plan."

I nodded thoughtfully.

"For the space of ten moons, we shall wait for you on one pretext or another, trading here and there throughout the city."

"Ten moons?" I gasped. How could they manage to remain ten months without arousing suspicion?

"It is the largest city in the entire world."

I smiled with a trace of irony. He caught the significance of the smile and nodded: "You will see."

I finished dressing and then regarded myself with amusement in Red-beard's mirror. If Don could see me now! Or for that matter, any one else! Surely if I should attempt the return trip in the time-machine (should I ever be able to locate it under the Salton), I would undoubtedly land in an insane asylum, in my efforts to explain such an outfit of clothes!

However, if anyone was able to gather any amusement, I was that person, for the rest dressed quickly with grim faces and hate in their eyes as they glanced now and then toward their burning city. Then tossing their own clothes into the sea, each man took his

place at the oars, pulling out of the harbor, and leaving Chan-Chan to its fate.

## CHAPTER IV

### Xibalba—City of the Gods

WE pulled at our oars all night, and then toward dawn, we made our way up a river. I thought we were again merely hiding out for the daylight hours, but I was mistaken. After a short sleep, we continued. It soon became apparent, however, that we were continuing in what was not a river, but a canal. After one more night of travel, we began to row by daylight.

As we wound through the mountains, I was amazed at the engineering skill displayed in handling and fitting the enormous rocks with which the walls of this canal were fashioned. Apparently it was in need of continual repair from landslides and the cracking effect of large and active faults. Undoubtedly the canal was first put down when the mountains themselves were not as high, thus necessitating continual deepening, and also suggesting the extreme antiquity of the original structure.

As we passed through the highest points and into the rolling hinterland beyond, I was surprised to see how extensive was the terraced farming carried on by the inhabitants. For days and days we navigated our little craft through the hanging gardens. Some terraces were of various fruits, some of vegetables and some of corn. Here and there we would come upon a walled town, rising acropolis-fashion to its central temple, or again perched precariously on the top of some sheer cliff.

The country was becoming more and more thickly populated. Often the natives, working in their fields or driving

their llama trains to market, would stop and stare at us with their lustrous dark eyes. Or leaning on their staffs, their brightly colored cotton garments blowing in the breeze, they would call loudly for their families to come and view our craft.

Finally the day came when we entered the great lake. To my amazement, I found that as far as the eye could see, a network of streets scattered a teeming population in every direction, while the mountains in the background were terraced to the edge of the normal timberline with the usual hanging gardens. For days we sailed through this enormous metropolis whose inhabitants must have numbered millions. New York, Manhattan and London could have been placed side by side with enough room left over for Berlin and Paris! I now realized that Ancient Babylon, extensive though it might have been, could not compare to Ancient Xibalba. Here indeed, was the earth's most powerful city-state.

Yet it was not the amazing size of the metropolis as much as the style of its architecture which fascinated me. Even though I was prepared for an extensive display of gold and silver as well as precious and semi-precious stones, still I could not help marvelling at the ornate wealth of these buildings. Even the lesser shops seemed to be fretworked with what I still thought of as the *precious* metals.

As we progressed, we came to more enormous pyramids and temples, fashioned of giant blocks of basalt and limestone. We began to trace our path along a sea-wall which grew ever more powerful as the city sank behind it. Was this an older part of the city—extending back into days when the lake was more shallow? I hurried to the side of Red-beard.

"What is the reason for the wall?"

"Long ago when the city was first founded, it is written that they needed no wall. Then came those years when the lands of the earth were flooded and many cities were blotted from the living. When men returned to Xibalba after the waters had receded, they built these walls and gradually reclaimed the ancient part of the city."

This would suggest that the sea level had changed since, or rather during the time of man. I remembered the fish traps on Salton Sea. Was Xibalba more ancient than those traps?

"What other cities were blotted out, and where are they located?"

"Toward the sunrise-sea along the great river are the crumbling remains of many powerful cities whose inhabitants were overwhelmed."

"Have your people a memory of those days?"

"They were long, long ago when the northern lands were colder than they are now, and the sun was dim. So it is written."

Was he speaking of the end of the ice age when the glaciers poured their melting contents into the rising seas? But with a sweep of his arm, he recalled my attention to the gigantic wall.

"See. They are expecting us."

I GLANCED up and was surprised to see a huge draw-bridge with a landing quay attached, being lowered toward the water, some few hundred feet in front of us. I nodded to Red-beard in agreement, and he signaled with his eyes for me to note all the attention we were attracting. Boats and craft of all descriptions pressed around us and followed us curiously.

We dropped anchor, and leaving three men to guard the ship, we shinnied down the ropes to our waiting barks. The men looked innocent enough, but under their clothes I knew they had

buckled wicked obsidian knives around their waists. Their faces, too, had a grim set not usually found upon traders.

As I watched the slowly descending bridge-monster with great log ribs and rivets of shining silver settle upon the water, the suspicion crossed my mind that this long tongue of the serpent would lick us into a trap from which we would never escape alive. Yet at that moment, none of us were as anxious to enter the kingdom of the "LORDS OF THE UNDERWORLD" as I. Perhaps that is why I was the first to scramble up the draw-bridge and stand in speechless awe at the sight of the lake behind me.

From this high point of vantage, our ship was a mere toy lying on the green expanse of the water, while the magnificent metropolis stretched to every side, the crowning jewels of which were the exquisitely templed islands.

Yet if I had thought this sight awe-inspiring, the vision which was spread below me as I crossed the esplanade checked my hasty steps with an abruptness which left me momentarily paralyzed. Here was the ancient capitol in all of its thundering glory.

Lifting its glittering temple upon our left, and in fact dominating the entire scene, was a sixteen-sided, seven-hundred-foot-square pyramid. Its golden sides were covered with hieroglyphic symbols, as it rose tier after tier, platform after platform in a graceful design of sunken panels, the meaning of which I knew to be the cycles of the past, four hundred years to the cycle — each carved with its own events, and each bearing its minute relation to the whole.

On the top of this tremendous structure, stood a temple whose black, polished pillars and gold-fretted, black roof crowned the golden base with exquisite though ornate beauty.

Huge stairs of carved monoliths, in-

laid with sacred jade and malachite climbed the eastern face of the structure, pausing before the doorway of each platform in turn before they finally reached the temple.

Upon each side of this stairway undulated two dragons of emerald mosaic whose glittering open mouths guarded the first step, while the tails curved to brace the roof of the crowning temple.

I realized that another draw-bridge had been lowered into the city.

We descended into the street with its colorful crowds, swaying palanquins, and burdened llamas. We were the object of all eyes. Women with children astride their hips, or others with one or two little ones peeking from their skirts, as well as barking dogs, shouting vendors (momentarily hushed), porters carrying great baskets of goods, or girls bearing graceful jars upon their heads, all made way for us, marveling at our strangeness.

THE sun was sinking rapidly, for the last rays now only touched the gold-fretted roof of the temple on top of the great pyramid. The street already lay in that blue dusk which precedes twilight. Suddenly the flourish of trumpets cut through the tumult which the sight of us was causing, and the throng pressed back against the buildings as every eye was turned in anticipation toward the temple. We also stopped and waited.

Another flourish of trumpets and then the procession came into view. Moving to the oriental rhythm of drums, gourd rattles, pans, pipes and flutes, came a wave of bronze-clad lancers followed by a row of torch bearers and then more lancers bearing shields embossed with the golden insignia of the sun whose armor glinted with a million pin-pricks of fire in the reflected glow of the torches. Then borne upon

the naked shoulders of four huge, white-skinned porters was the magnificent royal palanquin.

As if they had been a field of grain blown upon by a strong wind, every head among the people bowed before their monarch. I forgot my Chimu friends standing behind me, as I folded my arms and awaited his Highness' nearer approach.

First I could make out his olive-tanned leg carelessly swinging its golden sandal over the edge of the embossed leather cushions upon which he rode, and then as his litter was brought to a halt before me and a rich carpet unrolled upon the stone-flagged street to receive his royal feet, I studied his clothes and finally his face.

His tunic was of the finest silk-like wool, embroidered with threads of gold and silver and studded with pearls, while a feather mantle of extreme delicacy flowed from his shoulders. He had removed his golden helmet with its gleaming emeralds and iridescent green quetzal plumes, and tossed it carelessly aside. His dark hair, bobbed at the chin line, gave his eager face the look of a little boy as he sprang lightly down upon the carpet.

Curiously we eyed each other. To me he was a rather likeable chap of about my own age. Yet somehow he seemed to me to be much younger. Perhaps it was because, standing as he did, among these powerfully muscled porters, he appeared to be slight and frail by comparison. To him I was, and would probably remain, a mystery. Yet if fate could only somehow have allowed us to share our two such different worlds, how much richer we might have both become for that experience! It was a hope that I had no right to form, harboring as I did, such treasonable intentions. Yet this was such an intriguing thought that the

realization we were being silently surrounded by the lancers, came as almost a shock. We were indeed prisoners of this would-be Caesar who had undoubtedly conquered Chan-Chan in order to insure his fame to posterity, while here before him, posterity was wondering who he was.

## CHAPTER V

### The Man I Must Kill

THEN suddenly the roar of a thousand cannon exploded upon the silence of that moment. The eyes of the populace which had been cast upon the ground in deference to the monarch, were suddenly raised in fear to the great pyramid. The lancers stopped. Even the young ruler looked up. Yet in his dark, deep-set eyes I saw, or imagined I saw, a fury of insolent defiance. . . .

I turned to Red-beard questioningly, but his stony expression did not give me a clue as to what might have caused that growling clap of thunder. The boyish face of the king still stared grimly at the pyramid, and I turned back again to that tremendous structure with a feeling of expectancy.

The pyramid was in shadow except for a strange white glow from the inside of the crowning temple. Even as I wondered at this light, a figure in black silhouetted itself shadow-wise in the portal, and raised its arms aloft. Again the multitude bowed with the exception of the young monarch and Red-beard's crew.

Stepping slightly aside, I saw them standing behind me as I had been standing—legs slightly apart, arms folded across their breasts.

Now from the temple came the throb of a weird rhythm, as guided by a torch-bearer, a procession of black-

robed priests began to wend their way down. For what seemed an endless time they came and the crowd waited—yet I was not aware of the flight of the minutes, so entranced was I with the exotic unreality of it all.

Finally the procession reached us and I saw what I shall always consider the most evil face I ever hope to look upon. I do not know why I should have suddenly taken such an instant loathing to this High-Priest with the beady eyes and eagle-beaked nose. Yet to me at that moment, he was the embodiment of evil cunning, and I felt a surge of relief at the realization that he was to be my adversary instead of the boyish ruler.

In the deep blue twilight, splashed through with the red fire of the torches, these evil eyes ran over our little group and came to rest upon my own. Slowly my hand slipped to my belt, but suddenly I felt the hazel-blue eyes of Red-beard upon me. I looked at him. He gave a tiny negative movement of the head, looking from me to the surrounding lancers. Yes, perhaps he was right. I should be able to find a less dangerous moment than this.

I glanced back at the High-Priest and caught the fleeting ghost of a smile. Had he seen me signal Red-beard? And above all, had he caught the significance of Red-beard's reply?

The hot words of the young monarch began to tumble over each other in a strange, musical tongue. Acidly and laconically the High-Priest replied. They were bidding for me!

Again the warm, impassioned voice of the youthful ruler. My eyes strayed from the torch-lit face of the head-priest to his train of satellites who trailed away into the blue dusk like a flock of black buzzards.

Then "Long-nose" stepped forward from our crew, apparently offering his

services as interpreter. For some time the three harangued. Sometimes "Long Nose" appeared to consult with Red-beard but the language they spoke was apparently pure gibberish. Not one word of Chimu was spoken. The plot was working excellently well.

Suddenly the young monarch capitulated. The porters picked up his palanquin and he seated himself a trifle petulantly upon the cushions.

At the same time the High-Priest brought forth a small pouch and opening the leather draw-strings, thrust his hand in to the contents, allowing emeralds, rubies, pearls, lapis and other jems to trickle through his long, slim brown fingers before he again pulled the strings and tossed the pouch to Red-beard. Thus, for what appeared to me to be a good price, I had been sold.

If I entertained a moment of regret for this adventure which I had embarked upon so blithely, it was during that long march through the deepening dusk up the face of the pyramid. I had hoped that we might go all the way to the temple where I could catch a glimpse of the inner light, but in this I was to be disappointed.

Before we had climbed through four platforms, the torch-bearer turned inside, and we followed him down what then appeared to be a descending passageway, barely wide enough for two to walk abreast.

Once I thought of drawing my revolver, but as I turned around to "spot" the High-Priest, I realized that he was gone. Therefore I followed my captors meekly and allowed them to close huge bronze doors upon me, through the barred window of which I watched the torch retreat into the distance, leaving me alone in the dark.

As the shuffle of their sandaled steps came back ever more faintly, I sank down against the cold metal with a

heavy heart. My head sagged down wearily, and in a few minutes I was asleep.

A HORRIBLE roar which caused the entire building to reverberate with its dying echoes, brought me to my feet. I must have slept for hours, for it was a moment before I could remember where I was. When I did review the events of the past day, I looked back with a refreshed spirit. After all, the High-Priest would not have paid such a large sum for me if he had intended to let me starve. I would let them know I was awake. And hungry. But how?

Suddenly I made up my mind, and simultaneously let out a war-whoop which would have done justice to a Comanche. Then I listened. Nothing happened. My shout echoed and re-echoed down endless corridors until at last silence returned—silence broken by the dripping of water upon stone. I tried again. Still no answer.

I began to have my doubts about the High-Priest's intentions. Perhaps jewels were common as dirt and the price was niggardly. And perhaps the lancers had killed Red-beard and had brought back the jewels. Or possibly even Red-beard . . .

I gripped my head. This was getting me no place fast. After all, I had not explored the cell. Possibly there was some way out.

With a kind of wild hope, I began to trace my way around the cell. Here was a wall—rough and a trifle damp. Then suddenly I stopped—every sense alert. Was this a door? With nervous excitement, my groping fingers assured me that it was a sort of passageway. It was damp, narrow and slanted rather steeply down. For a moment I listened with sinking heart. Was that water running? The sound came up with a

kind of mockery. So this passage ended in running water! Before I took it, better be certain that there was no other choice.

Once again I groped my way forward and around to the bronze barred door. After another futile yell, I decided it was the passage into the water or starvation. Better drowning than that. Possibly there was a way around the water. Probably not. At any rate, I had to take the chance.

Slowly I began to grope my way along. In the complete blackness, I could feel that the tunnel seemed to go down at a very steep angle. At this rate, I must be already under ground. However, it was not the sharp pitch, but the wet sliminess of the huge stones over which I crept that kept my hair on end. Twice I slipped, only managing to check myself in a mad, downward plunge by pressing upon the side walls. I felt my tunic ripping while I had already skinned both my knuckles and knees.

Cautiously, for one convinced that his moments were numbered, I felt my way forward. The floor of the passageway had now become a series of slimy stone steps over which I half-slid to a long level platform. Beyond was empty space. I leaned over the ledge and listened. Water was flowing below. I tried to feel it with my arm but I could not. Then as I brought my arm up, it touched a rope.

A rope! My end was fastened in the rock. The other end was evidently hanging free though a long way down. Ropes did not place themselves in rock. This one was here for a purpose. Possibly this river was sometimes used . . . a boat perhaps— It was a wild, almost forlorn hope. Quickly I gripped the rope and shinnied down.

As I slid down, I bore more of the pressure than I had realized against

my gunbelt, until suddenly I felt it loosening. Horror-stricken, I clutched at it, lost my grip and plunged headlong. I had managed to grasp a breath of air before the water closed over my head, and now as I fought my way to the top, I only had one thought—that welcome weight around my waist was gone. I had lost my gun!

## CHAPTER VI

### I Find a Nymph Swimming

**SICK** with this misfortune, but grateful that I was still alive, I allowed myself to drift with the stream. After what must have been hours, it seemed to me that the inky blackness of the tunnel was lifting. At times I could almost make out the rocky roof above my head. I was also certain that the speed of the river had diminished.

Raising my body upright for a moment and treading water, I tried to look around. That was when I discovered the cause of this ghostly light. It was in the water itself. The river was becoming more and more phosphorescent.

I splashed my hand through it, and the splash became a spray of green fire, lighting up the wet rocks some four or five feet above my head. Farther than this I could not see. I tried making two large splashes, but the eerie greenish glow only revealed an expanse of black water beneath a low-hanging, uneven, rocky vault. Then as I was about to drop back again I heard, or thought I heard a long-drawn-out "Haloo-oo."

I immediately answered with a similar call and listened. Yes! There it was again!

"Haloo-oo."

This time I was able to tell the exact direction. I cupped my hands and called back. Then I began to swim, every few moments stopping to call and await the

answer as a check upon my directions. The call came from what was evidently one of the banks.

I had decided the voice was that of a woman—perhaps a young woman. Then as I neared it, it became softer, finally ceasing altogether. Once I reared upright to look around me when my eye was attracted by the occasional splash of green fire as something swam toward me through the black water. Was this the owner of the voice, or was it some kind of animal?

After a moment of hesitancy I decided to meet it. Streaking through the water, and leaving a trail of glowing green flame behind me, I quickly shortened the distance between us. Then before I came upon it, I stopped for one last look, so that if it should prove to be an alligator, I would be better prepared to ward off the attack. Not that an alligator can imitate a woman's voice, but I wasn't taking any chances.

As I reared up and splashed the glowing water, however, I found myself looking down upon the glowing white, breath-takingly beautiful body of a young woman, around which her floating tunic resembled a veil of living green flame. She raised her lovely face and looked at me, the spray around her slim throat lighting the smooth wetness of her curving breasts. We allowed ourselves to drift close, only our heads out of the water, facing each other as if we were two lost souls meeting in some nether world.

"At last you have come. I was beginning to worry."

The Chimu tongue never sounded so musical.

"Have I kept you waiting long?" I asked foolishly, while I noted, with the help of a few splashes, that her tilted eyes were long and as green as the flame from the water.

"For half the span of a sun! But you

must listen closely if you wish to retain life. Even if you have been sent by the gods, there are many dangers."

"Why should I brave any dangers when I can stay here and talk to you?"

"Because it is written that you are to overcome the LORDS OF THE UNDERWORLD!"

"Is it?"

"And besides you have promised."

"Oh but that was before . . ." I gasped. How could she know of my bargain with Red-beard?

"Before what?"

"Nothing."

"Then we must not waste time. I fear that I may have been followed. If I am suspected, it will mean the death of us both. Therefore listen carefully. Drift with the river until you come to the HOUSE OF COLD. There you must leave the water, for it plunges into a new canyon. Join the river after you have passed The Falls and remain with it until you have passed the HOUSE OF FIRE. But don't forget to take fire with you! It will see you through the two caves which lead to the GREAT COURT of THE LORDS OF THE UNDERWORLD. There, you must bow only to the living. Accept no food nor drink. Decline the seat of honor. That is all I know. Yet I am certain that there we shall meet again."

"I hope so."

"Have you understood all that I told you?"

"Not exactly," I confessed, "but perhaps it will become more sensible as I go on. However, there is something you forgot to tell me."

"What is that?"

"Who may you be—rising like a lovely water-nymph out of this underground river."

"I AM the princess of Chan-Chan. I am betrothed to the monarch of

Xibalba."

"I saw your city on fire. That was quite an engagement present he gave you."

"Yes. He has broken his promised word. Yet my people tell me that it was the fault of the High-Priest."

"What do you think?"

"I care not for either of them."

"What is your name?"

Her eyes smiled a little as she answered: "My name is Tah-ee. It means the deep, green sea."

"I said that you were a water-nymph. Your eyes told me so. They remind me of the sea."

"What is your name—stranger from whose mouth flows perfumed flowers?"

"My name? Oh, it's Henry."

"Ahnree. That is a pretty name. What does it mean?"

"Names don't have meanings in my world."

"Where is this world of yours?"

"If I told you the truth, you wouldn't believe me."

"Yes I would—if you told me the truth."

"Then I have come to your world through milleniums of time from a world in which Xibalba and Chan-Chan are only legends and their sites are crumbling mounds. Now, do you believe me?"

"I do not understand how such things can be, but" gazing through my eyes into my very soul, "I believe that you are telling the truth."

"It is the truth. I do not quite understand it myself. But oh, I am so anxious to learn of this world of yours . . ."

"But our libraries? We are giving them to the future. They contain our literature, philosophy, mathematics, mythology, astronomy, history . . ."

"Between my world and yours there are many wars and conquests. Other

nations have risen: the Incas; the Aztecs; names which you never heard of."

"It matters not. Libraries and pyramids are respected. They may be carried off as treasures. But they are not destroyed."

"Yet the libraries of the last nations were destroyed. They were purposely burned . . . without being read."

"Who would do this barbarous act?"

"One of the men of my race.\* I mean he was akin to my people . . . he came from over the sun-rise sea," I ended miserably.

"By what right did he do this thing?" The question, etched in acid, hung between us.

"Because he thought they were heathenish . . . I mean he thought they disagreed with his religion. And because he was stupid. It has proved to be an irreparable tragedy . . . impossible for his posterity to forgive . . ."

The lines of her face softened.

"After all, it was not your fault Ahnree. Tell me of this world of yours."

"We have learned to travel under the water and through the air, but we are no happier, and we still have war . . . Yet we know now that we are not the last generation. We know that the world will last milleniums after we are gone, even as Xibalba has gone, and we hope to someday reach a stage when there will be more chance for happiness. And we hope to someday outlaw war. Perhaps that is the first sign that humanity is at last becoming of age."

For a few moments we were silent. Then she said softly:

"Ahnree, I hate to remind you, but

if you are late to THE GREAT COURT they will know that you have dallied. Yet," smiling roguishly, "I would keep you here against my better judgment. Come, I have food for you."

"Food? You think of everything!"

THROUGH the dark water, I followed the green fire of her trail until she pulled her white body up against a dark bulk which proved to be a canoe. Bracing myself upon the other side, in order to balance our weights, I laughed as she handed me some slices of a light-colored substance.

"This is Turku, a large bird which we have domesticated for many centuries. We use its meat for food and its feathers for decoration."

"Turkey!" I smiled as my teeth closed down upon its tasty slices. She indicated other food, which I later found to be corn-bread, cheese and a baked potato.

For conversation as I munched the food she told me the story of a man she called Viracocha.

"He led the many Tribes of the Tiger away from their homeland when the great flood engulfed it."

"What was the name of this land?"

"We called it Antis. The northern tribes call it Aztlan.\* He brought us here in ships. He brought plants. That is why he is sometimes portrayed in a ship with the rising sun behind him, and sometimes holding plants in his hands. That is why the serpent is his slave, and the tiger heads adorn his tunic."

"But why the tiger heads? Did they keep tigers?"

"They were called the Tiger Tribes because that was their totem. He was the leader of them all. That is why we

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\* Bishop Landa. It is one of the greatest archeological tragedies of all time that this man destroyed the total knowledge of a mighty race in one barbarous act of fanaticism and superstition.—Ed.

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\* Lost Empires of Itzaes and Mayas—Willard.—Ed.

place the tiger upon the gates of our cities. And why we sometimes picture our kings as standing upon a tiger, or with a man's head upon a tiger's body. It is an acknowledgment of our origin in those ancient times when we spoke the same language."

"And why was the serpent his slave?"

"Because that is the totem of the sea, and the Tiger Tribes ruled the sea."

There were a thousand other questions I wanted to ask. Yet I kept thinking that she resembled a sphinx herself—a very attractive one, with the water beading her lashes and dripping from her little chin. Instead I made some remark about wishing that I could have seen the sunken gardens of Chan-Chan or have wandered through her Romanesque public baths.

"Ahnree, you must go . . ."

"Very well. Until we meet in this . . . this . . ."

"No! Wait! This world of yours . . . when are you going back?"

"I am afraid I shall never be able to go back."

"Is it wrong for me to say that I am pleased with what must be for you a very discouraging answer?"

I liked the little trick that she had of smiling with her long, slightly tilted, green eyes.

"As wrong as it would be for me to say that I am beginning to care less and less about returning!"

And then as she laughed, I dove in and swam down stream.

## CHAPTER VII

### Journey of the Ordeals

**A**LTERNATING swimming with floating, I hoped to rest part time and also make up for some of the time I had lost. Soon however, I began to

realize that the river was gaining speed, and that I might need my strength for a trial ahead. Therefore I again floated. Yet I could not completely relax. The speed of the flow was steadily increasing, and now, still some distance ahead, I could hear an ominous roar. The Falls!

If this place where I was supposed to leave the river was only one turn from that din, I would never make it unless I was close enough to the edge to take advantage of the eddies in the current, such as Tah-ee had done when she had left her canoe. But on which side of the river was this HOUSE OF COLD?

I lifted my head from the water and looked around. The tunnel was growing perceptibly lighter. I could make out the fact that I was coming to a large bend from beyond which a pale, greenish glow seemed to be shining. The current, which was momentarily gaining momentum, swept me sharply around a great elbow of rock, and into one of the weirdest chambers one could imagine. With a gasp of amazement I stared at the fantastic beauty unrolled before me.

From the vast vault of the roof, poured a waterfall that struck the center of a dark lake like a huge fountain of luminescent emeralds. On the sides of this lake towered enormous ice cliffs reflecting the green light from their thousands of faceted sides. Undoubtedly this was the HOUSE OF COLD, but which side of the lake should I choose? I stared from one to the other, wondering idly which was the most exoticly spectacular, as I swam away from the clutching currents of the waterfall. Yet once past this fountain of green flame, I realized that the forward sweep of the river as it gathered momentum for the deafening falls ahead, gave me but numbered moments to make up my

mind.

Determined to find out which way the river was swirling me, I reared up. The chimerical land of emerald ice towered all around me and through it the dark river hurried for its great plunge. I could now see quite plainly the direction of The Falls. I knew they must lay in the sudden turn to the right, because the ice-cliffs upon the opposite shore were hazed with a green illumination which must have been caused by the reflection of the phosphorescent falls upon the rising spray. At almost the same moment I remembered what Tah-ee had said about later rejoining the river. This meant that I must ascend the right bank.

The decision had almost come too late. As hard as I fought against the current, it seemed that I must inexorably be swept past the icy bank I was struggling to gain. Finally with that super-human strength which is born of despair, I made a last lashing try, using my best stroke and keeping my face in the water for more power.

I had the feeling that I was losing . . . that the clutching fingers of the current were dragging me into the maelstrom of fury, but knowing that the sight of that receding bank would be too heart-breaking, I determined to die fighting. Suddenly I felt my body caught in a cross-current and swirled to the bank. At the same moment my knees came into contact with some rounded boulders and bits of flotsam that felt like water-logged sticks.

I sank down upon them in exhaustion. I would have liked to have rested there indefinitely, but the freezing breath which the icy bank exhaled into the river forbade it.

Struggling into a kneeling posture preparatory to climbing out of the water, I was surprised to feel one of my knees break through what I had ac-

cepted as rounded rocks. I reached into the water and lifted one out. By the eerie light, I was shocked to see that I held a skull. With a shudder which was not entirely caused by the cold, I clambered upon the icy platform and looked around.

**A**T no place could I find the slightest depression which might serve as an excuse for a trail, so I merely followed the ice at a safe distance from the edge, lest the platform, being undermined by the warmer water of the river, might collapse with my weight.

Just opposite the great ice-cliff, around which the river swirled with ever-increasing fury, a cleft ran through the ice—a sort of bottomless crevass. Yet through it seemed to come a greenish glow. This would mean that it ended upon The Falls, or near that thundering torrent. There was no way by which I could skirt the outer edge of the ice-cliff above the turbulent water. If there was a way through, this must be the trail.

Groping along the crevass with my hands, I felt a narrow ledge upon which I might creep. Moving with extreme caution, lest I slide those few fatal inches, I hitched myself along. I was bitterly cold. My fingers were numb. My sandals, which during all my experiences in the water, had never left my feet, now seemed to have become clods of ice.

Then when I had almost forgotten to expect it, I came out upon the other side of the canyon. Below me plunged the torrent of green flame as the river poured over its first drop and cascaded into a steaming bowl of refulgent vapor. Tiny particles of ice filled the air, gathering upon my eyelashes and freezing on my wet hair. I was altogether too miserable to appreciate the wild beauty of the scene.

Clinging precariously to the face of the icy cliff, and making my way down from jutting ledge to jutting ledge, I was within some one hundred and fifty feet of the cauldron when my numb fingers slipped, and I fell headlong.

Striking my shoulder and the side of my head upon an icy pinnacle, and breaking it off with me in the crash, I was hurtled through the icy air toward the river. Undoubtedly I owed my life to my ability as a diver, for as I saw the dark river rushing up to meet me, I made a desperate effort to get my body under control for the contact. Then drawing in a long breath of air, I met the water.

After what seemed hours, I managed to fight my way to the top through strangling waves of warm liquid until at last I was able to breathe. For a few dizzy moments I was more dead than alive.

My jaw and shoulder ached from the crash against the ice-cliff, while to my cold-numbered body, the water seemed to be extremely hot. However in some inexplicable fashion, I managed to stay afloat until my mind had cleared and life surged back into my half-frozen limbs.

By that time, the HOUSE OF COLD with its incandescent mist and gleaming ice-cliffs was far behind, for the river had again carried my drifting body into another tunnel of darkness.

FOR hours I floated lazily while my ears, feet, and hands burned to the flow of returning blood. It was indeed a much needed rest, and I allowed myself to take advantage of it while my mind kept one eye open, as it were.

After a time I became aware that I was once more beginning to be able to see the rocky projections upon the uneven roof. It also seemed to me that in spite of my condition, in which any

heat would naturally tend to be exaggerated, the water was becoming warmer. This conviction was intensified when I began to perceive a red glow through the twisting tunnel. At each turn of the river, this crimson light was increased, until at last I was swept around the last bend and into the magnificent amphitheatre of the HOUSE OF FIRE.

Upon one bank boiled a gigantic cauldron of bubbling lava, while the river swirled me around the edge of the furnace. For a few moments I was able to look down into the blinding white heart of it while the deadly fumes streaked upward through a sort of giant blow-hole. In the next minute I had been swept past.

Yet the main core of the volcano was only the beginning of the HOUSE OF FIRE. I now found myself in a cavern of grotesque but breath-taking beauty. Numerous fumeroles flashed their scarlet light upon the monstrous crusted stalactites which supported the dim-vaulted roof, thus turning the two sides of the cavern into a giant edifice whose floor was made of mosaiced fire while the strange pillars were formed of a billion living rubies.

I had again almost drifted past when I remembered Tah-ee's admonition to take fire with me. Accordingly, I turned back and swam toward the bank. How I was to carry out this advice, I had no idea. Which bank to choose was an equally puzzling question. However, for one thing I was grateful—the river had slowed down as it spread out into this cavern, and I had no current to battle.

The warm water of the river had done much to help my injured jaw and shoulder, for now I was able to move my head without too much pain, while the fact that I could still swim, proved to me that I had sustained no broken

bones. For this, I was also grateful, though the fact occupied no more than a momentary flash of my attention which was in reality riveted upon gaining the shiny, black obsidian bank, and finding something which would burn slowly enough to be carried.

Climbing up carefully, in order not to cut myself upon the glass-like projections, I picked my way over the cracked and sometimes hot surface. The bottom of my sandals were steaming with the contact, and I blessed their thick leather soles. Hurriedly I went from kettle-hole to kettle-hole, trying to breathe as little of the poisonous air as possible—holding the tattered remnants of the tunic which still clung wetly to me, against my nostrils. I could find nothing acceptable. After all, what had I expected to find? Trees and bushes do not grow around an underground volcano.

I was just about to give up and return to the river, to rest my scorching sandals, when my eye caught sight of what seemed to be some twisted stalks behind a fallen stalactite. Picking my way over the glassy black floor, and one large stalagmite, I discovered to my unutterable delight, that I had come across a cache of torches. It was like having received a reprieve after having been condemned to death. Choosing the longest, I dipped it into the nearest kettle-hole, and like one of the ancient Greek runners in the torch race, hurried back to the river.

**N**OW the water seemed actually cool, and the relief to my smoking sandals was like a blessing. After resting a moment, I again set off down stream, swimming with one arm and holding my precious burden aloft with the other.

Through three more turns in the tunnel the river wound, and then once more the walls widened. I was in an-

other lake. I must explore to see if this had a shore. I could not take a chance of missing the trail. So far, I had not gotten off my course. Was this one of those caves which Tah-ee had said led to THE GREAT COURT?

Holding my torch high above my head, I tried to make out the extent of this lake of blackness. With no light to guide me save the one I myself carried, it seemed that I could see nothing but a black expanse of water. But no. To one side, there were twin points of light—two glorious golden-green jewels. Then suddenly they vanished. Puzzled, I started swimming toward them.

With the aid of my torch, I could now make out the river bank. There seemed to be a grass or straw of some kind along the edge of the water. That was strange. What was straw doing down here? Yes, it was straw. Feeling the fine black sand of the edge against my knees, I stood up and stared at the straw. Then I began to look up and down the bank, when my eyes encountered a sight which raised the hair of my head right up by the roots.

Not five feet from me stood the most enormous specimen of sabertooth tiger I had ever laid eyes upon. Only this one was alive!

I stood looking at the tiger and he looked at me. A thousand thoughts were racing through my mind. Paramount was the thought that Tah-ee had evidently expected to see me again. Had she even suspected the dangers of this trip so far? She had not even mentioned a tiger except as a totem. Should I go back into the river? A step back would probably be as dangerous as one ahead.

He had not sprung so far, and he had had a good chance when I was looking at the straw. Straw! There was my answer. Someone put that here! There-

fore the trail must be here. I took a step toward him and he still stood his ground, staring at me curiously.

He was very beautiful in his way. His rippling coat had a silky sheen in the flickering light. Instinctively, I lowered the torch so that it was between us. He watched the movement and the gold-green jewels of his eyes followed the flame. I then took another step forward. This time he backed up one step. I smiled. Perhaps Tah-ee was right about the fact that the torch would help me through the last two caves. She had not been wrong so far. And I must be certain of this ledge.

I began to take quick glances from the tiger to the ledge and back again to the animal. Why was this creature—which needed sunshine in order to live—here in the first place? Perhaps there was a way out of this lair of his. It was a sort of wild hope. I noticed with gratitude that he seemed to be well-nourished. Was it possible that he was a captive of the priests who pretended to have some religious interest in tigers? Yes. That was it! The tiger was the totem of the Xibalbans. This must be the trail!

I took another step forward and he took another step back. I was standing on the bank now, where he could easily have sprung at me. Yet, he showed no disposition to do so. This heartened me enough for me to glance at the ground for a trail before I glanced back at him. Yes, here was a path. It seemed to run into this dark cave with the low roof from which much straw protruded. However, might not this, on the other hand, be the animal's den, the intrusion upon which would arouse him to instant ferocity?

There was only one way to find out. I took a step forward. This time he did not retreat. Instead his tail switched and his lip curled back. No, this was

not the trail. Definitely not. Very slowly and deliberately, I stood my ground and looked around. Of course, I was mistaken. Over there in the shadows was a small boat which had been dragged up on the rocks.

**SLOWLY**, very slowly, I retreated toward it. I saw instantly that it was not Tah-ee's skiff. The tiger stood his ground. Only his glowing eyes followed the light of my torch. Then taking my eyes from his, I glanced into the boat. In surprise I exclaimed: "Hello! What's this?"

Startled at the sound of my own voice, I glanced quickly back at the cave's other occupant, but he did not seem to mind at all that I had spoken aloud. Perhaps it would not be such a bad idea to talk to him. Accordingly, I began to frame my thoughts aloud.

"You see," I said softly, as if explaining to a human being, "I had not expected to find more torches in this boat. Nor even more surprising, a footprint." Then becoming bold enough to lean over and examine it, I continued: "Rather fresh, I should say. Someone pulled in not too far ahead of me. He was decidedly in a hurry. Well the torches will come in handy. Mine is quite low."

I murmured this aloud while changing torches and sizzling my old one out in the river, but my thoughts were not with the new torch I chose, nor the smaller spare I decided to take for that margin of safety. Nor for the moment, were they concerned with the tiger. I was thinking of this man who had pulled his boat up on the rocks in such a hurry. Of course, he had not been eaten on the spot. That was important. But more important was the thought that he might have noted my arrival.

The tiger had taken a step toward me, sniffing slightly, and therefore I

said soothingly:

"I shall be bidding you farewell kitty. This man has done me one favor. He has played Theseus, and left me a trail through the labyrinth!"

I started out briskly to follow, but I had reckoned without the tiger. He made a short spring toward me. Instantly I stopped and waved the torch between us.

"So I was moving too fast, was I? Then I shall be more circumspect. But if you choose to eat me, you are going to have one badly burned nose first!"

As the tiger stopped, I again moved along the trail—slowly—one step at a time. The footsteps entered a large cave. I followed the footprints, and the tiger followed me. With one glance for the trail ahead, and one for the huge animal slinking through the shadows after me, I made my way forward.

I was almost glad that the cave had narrowed down to the point where only one could walk, for I knew that if once he passed me, I would indeed be lost. I could not go back now. That I was on the right trail, I was certain.

Sometimes the roof came down so low that I had to crawl. At such times, I could hear the tiger wriggling his belly over the wet rocks. Once I came to what seemed to be the edge. A pebble becoming dislodged under my sandal, dropped with a "plunk" into a pool of water. My heart sank. I had followed the trail every step of the way, but now I could not turn back because of the tiger behind me, nor could I go ahead, for if I jumped into that river, my torch must surely be extinguished!

For a moment I thought it over while the gold-green eyes watched me. The other man came this way. He also had a torch. How did he make it? Then I thought of the rope on the other ledge which ended in water. Perhaps this ledge had a rope too. I groped along

the smooth rock. Yes, there it was. But how could I hold a torch and climb down a rope? Yet there must be some way. The other man had done it.

I decided to do a bold thing. I removed the torch from between my crouching body and that of the animal, and rapidly searched the outer face of the rock. I was well rewarded. There were holes in the rock which would serve to brace the torch, while the climb down was a very short one. And most important of all, the tiger had not moved.

I placed my torch in the first brace and shinnied down. Then reaching up and placing the torch in the lowest brace, I slipped into the water. Thus I saved my light. As I swam away, I saw the tiger sitting on the edge, watching the red pool of my torch as it bobbed over the water. After about forty feet, I could make out the black hulk of a small boat pulled up on the shore. I headed toward it.

Walking out of the water, upon a sort of fine black sand, I studied the footprints around the bark. Yes, the occupant had certainly been in a hurry. Well, at least I now had one advantage. I could hurry too. I had left the tiger behind!

At that moment, a great splash disillusioned me. And in another moment, my torch picked up the glow of his great jewel-eyes. In the few moments before he would arrive and take up all of my attention again, I determined to orient myself and find my trail of tell-tale prints. The glance about the cave was a hunch which probably saved my life. A huge, vampire-bat swooped against me!

In another second he would have succeeded in knocking me down and hurling my torch away from me or putting it out with his great black wings! I forgot the tiger completely. I had to

make a fire and make it quickly!

## CHAPTER VIII

### Tah-ee Again

**S**HIELDING my precious light with my body, I looked around desperately for some means of starting a flame. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see the tiger wading toward me. As he came out of the water, he stopped to sniff at something on the sand. His unexpected movement drew my glance. The object was a skull. In fact, there were several. However, I wasn't interested, because skulls won't readily burn.

Dodging the long swoops of the monster bats, which were quite agile in spite of their bulk, I began hunting in concentric circles for something which would burn. If the priests of the pyramid, ever used this route, and I had evidence that they had, then there must be a cache somewhere. However, it was with a sinking heart that I now realized that the man before me must have known that this was a bat cave. He must have known that the animals sleep during the day, suspended from the roof by their tails. And when he came through he must have also known that the external day was almost over and the bats would soon be flying! That was how he got through. And that was also the reason that I was going to be trapped! Unless I could get a fire crackling . . . unless . . .

And then I saw it! A huge cache of pine cones and cedar boughs piled up behind a large stalagmite. I had hardly a moment to spare, for the air was already black with the squeaking creatures!

Leaping over the fallen stalactites in between, I plunged my torch into the smaller cache of pine cones. For an

agonizing second I thought the light had been extinguished by a pair of great black wings which swooped upon me, knocking the torch from my hands. But in another second the cones were blazing furiously, and the smoking torch, no longer necessary, was lying beside the smaller spare while I was preparing to feed these split logs to my fire.

At last, as the shower of sparks ascended into the vast vault of the cave, I crouched down and looked around me at the grotesque beauty of the cavern. Stalactites, marching away into the dim recesses, rose file on file like the mighty pipes of some giant organ, or the pillars of some madman's temple, whose diamond-encrusted sides scintillated in the flickering light of my fire. The musty smell of bats, however, amounted to almost an overwhelming stench.

A quick, sudden movement on the edge of the pool drew my attention from the soaring arches of the roof and their whirling black legions. I had completely forgotten the tiger. And now I saw him standing on his hind paws like a great cat engaged in clawing a bird out of the air.

"Well I'll be . . ." I exclaimed aloud as he pulled down an enormous bat. "So that is why you are so well fed? I thought you had designs on me, and here you only intended to use the fire I would have had to build, for your own hunting purposes! Kitty, I have certainly been doing you an injustice!"

**T**HE night dragged wearily on. I fed the fire with logs and the tiger caught bats. He continued to kill long after he had been surfeited with food. I wondered idly what he would do with the pile of dead bats around him. Probably he would carry them to his lair. I could not remember seeing any dead bats when I waded out of the water. Of course, there were

those skulls. But they were probably poor devils who had been killed by the bats, after they had wandered into, or had been condemned to The Bat Cave . . .

I must have dozed for a few moments, for I awoke with a start and noted first of all that my roaring fire had died out to a few embers. The bats had vanished. The tiger was lying upon a couch of black wings—apparently asleep.

Nursing the fire back, enough for it to catch my torch (I was using the spare now), I walked quietly over to the trail and started away. I had hoped to be able to move on without arousing the tiger. Again I was mistaken. He yawned and looked at me like a sleepy cat. Then stretching indolently, he rose to his feet and after hesitating a moment between me and the dead bats, he strolled after me.

"I appreciate the compliment, Kitty," I said in my softest tones, "but you make me nervous. Perhaps that is because of my suspicion that in spite of your huge dinner of dark fowl, you still prefer white meat."

Yet I laughed to myself at the thought of what an odd pair we made, as we tramped through that vast cavern, the crystal incrustations of the stalactites flashing my torchlight back with all the prismatic hues of a million diamonds.

In spite of the uncomfortable distrust I felt for my companion, however, I could not help but notice two things. The first fact was that we had been steadily climbing since I had clambered out of the river into the saber-tooth's front yard. The second fact was one that aroused all of the scientist in me to the fever-pitch. These cave drippings for some time now had been assuming some very strange shapes. Huge buildings followed one another in grandeur,

each one eerily misshapen, as if some mischievous genii had drenched it in a bath of half-cooled wax and then dusted the result with spangles. Finally the truth began to dawn upon my tiger-preoccupied brain. These were actual buildings! I was looking upon an abandoned and very ancient city which the cave was attempting to reclaim again.

Is this what Tah-ee meant when she called the Xibalbans the LORDS OF THE UNDERWORLD? Or was it Curly I who had called them by that name? At any rate, had the Xibalbans once lived here before the world deluge came down upon all low-lying cities and those built underground? Was this the reason that such an excellently fortified place as this must have been, had been abandoned?

I began to stare around me hungrily. Unknown, Karnaks! Long-forgotten Mycaean lion-gates covered with rock-candy! Palaces of Knossos! And here a half-buried Sphinx! I looked at the gigantic man's head on the crouching animal body and then back at my companion. And I laughed at the realization that, though undoubtedly disconcerting, yet it was not altogether improper that my silent comrade through the streets of this kingdom of the dead, should be the monarch of all the giant cats.

I HAD been so completely absorbed in the remains of this ancient city, that I had not noticed for some time, the cavern had been gradually getting lighter. Now as I strolled slowly through this sort of twilight, which at the same time was not a dusk as much as a kind of half-light, the realization broke upon me suddenly. Apparently I was coming up to the daylight. Yet it was with a feeling of regret—regret that my too-faithful companion had kept me from exploring these relics of

an unknown antiquity.

However, in spite of any feelings I might have upon the matter, it was becoming evident that only one turn lay between me and the daylight. I made the turn, expecting to find myself in the upperworld. Instead I stopped in consternation. I was in a vast chamber. The light was not the sun at all, but a huge, incandescent, blue-white ball swinging from the blue vault of the roof. As I stood there blinking in the glare, I began to realize I was either in a temple or palace of magnificent dimensions.

Apparently I had been expected. Or were these silent figures seated on either side of the mosaiced walk leading to that golden, jewel-encrusted empty throne—a *court of the dead*?

I looked at them more closely. The robes and mantles of these seated figures were woven of the finest silky wool and embroidered in brocades of precious metals, freighted with jems. But I could not decide whether their faces, which, under their head-dresses of iridescent quetzal plumes had been painted black and white to resemble owls, were those of once-living men or cleverly modeled figures. Not one moved even a fraction of an inch as he sat upon his tiger-skin chair to either side of the mosaiced jade and silver causeway which led to the throne.

As for the temple itself, it beggared description. Over the lavishly mosaiced floor, the walls extended the vision both through time and space, for as one looked upon them he saw not walls, but the cataclysmic destruction by volcanic fire and cyclonic waves of a shining gold-and-marble city from which mad-dened throngs fled in ships, fishing craft, boats—anything which might carry them away from the holocaust.

Yet to me the most amazing sight was neither these silent figures border-

ing the walk which led to the empty throne, nor the frescoed walls, but the glow of that blue-white globe. I stared at it in unbelief, rubbed my eyes and stared again. Yes, there it was! One of those mysterious lights from Brazil's impenetrable "Green Hell"—the very rumors of which have so mesmerized our scientifically-minded moderns! One of those lights which are reported to shine from the ruined temples of "lost cities," and which many a white explorer has given his life to behold! I stared at it with aching eyes. Was it some unknown ray? Or an enormous piece of radio-active substance? How could . . .

A WARM breath swept across my bare leg and a furry coat touched my ankle just above my frazzled sandal. My hair rose involuntarily.

"Don't be impatient, Kitty," I said softly in my most winning tones as I stepped away from him. "I was just about to continue our little stroll anyway. Besides, it wouldn't be polite to keep such a distinguished company waiting."

I had almost forgotten the tiger in my interest, first in the encrusted ruins and now in the palace before me. Perhaps he was tame. At least he had had a number of chances to attack me in the last two hours, but had not done so. I glanced at him thoughtfully.

He was not looking at me, but at the strange scene spread before us. Very slightly, his tail was switching back and forth—a sign in the cat family, of impatience, or some type of nervous tension. I decided to move forward again without delay.

Yet even as I moved onward, I wondered how I could possibly carry out Tah-ee's instructions. Undoubtedly, this was the GREAT COURT where she was supposed to meet me. Needless

to say, she was nowhere in sight. Yet as I remembered those rules, I was to do several things here before I would see her. It would be easy enough to refuse the seat of honor, somewhat harder to refuse food or drink in my present ravenous condition, but to bow only to the living! How was one to tell which of these silent figures was alive? If any?

Hoping for some kind of a miracle, I started slowly along the exquisitely mosaiced jade and silver walk. Critically watching the eyes of these creatures for some sign of life, my attention was suddenly attracted to the third figure. The eyes, under their face-paint, so still a moment before, now widened in amazement as the head turned toward me. But the eyes were not staring at me. They were focused in terror upon something which was following me. I could not but help a little chuckle as I made a sweeping bow.

"Thank you Kitty!" I said in a voice whose warm tones echoed hollowly through the hall.

The sound of my voice was too much for human curiosity. One after another, the living figures turned, and each time the eyes widened in amazement and fear. It was simple to note those who had turned and to bow to them. And so I arrived before the throne.

AT that moment, two young women who had been standing like stationary attendants at the end of one line of figures, stepped forward. One placed a beautiful feather-worked mantle made heavy with emeralds around my shoulders over the tattered remnants of my torn and dirty tunic, while the other put a head-dress of quetzal plumes upon my head.

I submitted to this decoration willingly enough because I couldn't remember any instruction from Tah-

ee to the contrary, but when two more of these life-sized dolls became alive and offered me fruits and liquid from a golden bowl, I shook my head.

I came no nearer to the throne. I merely waited for something else to happen. Frankly, I was afraid that the expected "something" would be contributed by the tiger. He didn't approve of the fluttering white garments of these women. And he didn't like so many people around him. He paced back and forth across the walk fretfully, his tail swinging to and fro.

I remembered that I still carried an almost burnt-out torch over my shoulder, the light from which was still sufficient to keep him at bay. However, ridiculous as it might seem, I was becoming rather attached to him, and I would have much preferred using the torch on the missing High-Priest.

The tiger, as if reading my thoughts, raised his yellow-green eyes from my face to the dazzling blue-white globe whose rays lighted this weird assemblage. Following his gaze, I was surprised to see a slender spiral stairway of silver descending from the roof, while my ear caught the thin, sing-song wail of flutes punctuated by the savage throb of drums.

"Boom-2-3-4! Boom-2-3-4!"

Some kind of ritualistic procession was nearing that opening in the vault. The tiger snarled softly.

"So you don't like him either, Kitty? I wonder why. Was he your trainer since cub-hood? And if so, I imagine that he was cruel. If he had been mine . . . Hatred has made us partners. And perhaps you will be a better weapon than the lost revolver. We shall see . . . If I am not mistaken, I shall be needing help, for that is the death-march, and the Death-god will be leading the parade. Yes, I had the correct 'hunch' all right—here they come!"

"Boom-2-3-4! Boom-2-3-4!"

Each throb of the drum was a step nearer for this strange procession. In the lead was a grotesque figure made up to represent the skeleton form and skull face of the Death-god. After him, came a horrible old hag. Was this the benevolent Earth-mother of the Megaliths, in her vicious aspect of storms and floods? And this swaying one in tiger skins with his long tiger tail . . . who was he? While that fang-toothed creature with the small beard and pop-eyes—was he meant to be the plant-giving Viracocha? If so, what untold milleniums of rituals with their fungus growth of other religions, had so changed this great hero of the "Tiger-Tribes!" Even the Bat-god was represented, but I had eyes for only one now—the High-Priest!

"Boom-2-3-4! Boom-2-3-4!"

They were getting very close. The tiger was pressing against me. I could feel his trembling body. Before I had realized what I was doing, I had stroked his ruffled coat. I withdrew my hand quickly. It would be unwise to touch such an excited animal. I would speak to him again in English. Perhaps the sound of my voice would quiet him for a few moments.

"That is the man you both fear and hate, isn't it?" I said softly. He paid no attention to me, still pressing against me heavily as he stared at the High-priest. Yet I continued to talk.

"He is the eighth in line, and unless I am mistaken, nine was the mystic number. Yes, there is a ninth! A figure veiled in black. Even the head is covered! Is there another victim?"

"Boom-2-3-4! Boom-2-3-4!"

The weird procession had reached the mosaiced floor and were spreading out in a fan-like movement with a shuffling step. The fan was moving around the back of the empty throne. Now as

they chanted softly to the sing-song notes of the flutes, the High-priest led the victim toward us.

AS this man approached us, the trembling body of the tiger pressed so heavily against me that he pushed me into one of the seated figures. I clutched at it to steady myself, and it came tumbling from its chair of tiger-skins in a cloud of bones and dust. It had evidently been a mummy. But I didn't have time to think about it.

The sabertooth, frightened afresh at the noise, leaped to one side snarling and striking at me with an outstretched claw. Luckily I was able to jump out of reach and balance the torch between us. Again I spoke softly to calm him.

"Now don't start losing your head, Kitty. I am not the High-priest. There he is over there. See with what an expression of amused contempt he is watching us? We shall have to prove to him that he who laughs last has usually the best point to his joke."

The circle of priests was swaying and shuffling to the slow rhythm of the ritual dance, and this once more attracted the attention of the tiger. He forgot me, and breathing more easily, I put the torch again over my shoulder. Then the victim began to sway, dropping the hand which had led him to the spot just in front of the throne. The High-priest caught one end of the wrapping veil. To the almost intolerable throb of the drums, the victim began to turn—faster and faster.

The weird chant which was even setting my teeth on edge was driving the tiger crazy. He began to growl ferociously. His eyes were on the High-priest. Was that black-robed incarnation of devilishness giving some command to the tiger? Why was he staring at the animal and chanting to it like that? Why was he leaning forward

with that intent expression of expectation as he watched the least muscle-ripple beneath that coat of glistening fur?

Then suddenly the victim began to give a strange half-whirling shuffle as the veils gathered in the hands of the High-priest. With a shock, I began to realize that this was not a man. The small pink-stained toes of the bare feet were those of a woman, while the long chestnut waves of her hair . . .

I clapped my hands over my mouth to suppress my cry of horror as the thinning veils began to outline her face! The victim was Tah-ee!

Was she mad to dance like that before the tiger, especially when there was some kind of flimsy red skirt on the bottom of her shimmering green dress, which fluttered around her bare feet like bloody, wounded wings? Or didn't she realize her danger? Her eyes were closed and her hands were folded as one asleep.

I whirled around and looked at the tiger. It wasn't a moment too soon! His maddened eye had caught the fluttering red veils! He was already crouched for the death-spring!

## CHAPTER IX

### Cabrakan, the Earthquake Monster

WITH a bound I leaped in front of the girl and swung her to one side as I faced him from here. With a thud he landed where we had been a moment before, and snarling furiously, he turned and thrust a claw at me. Deliberately I waved the torch before his face.

For the fraction of a minute he hesitated, before he began gathering himself for a second spring. In that fraction of time, I gave the sagging veil which still bound Tah-ee to the High-priest a sudden jerk. It slapped the

tiger sharply on the flank, and yanked the unprepared "sphinx of evil" toward the infuriated animal.

The effect was instantaneous! The maddened cat whirled around and leaped upon the staggering figure. Snarls! Screams! And spurting blood dying the sacred jade of the pavement with scarlet!

Shifting the torch, and flinging Tah-ee over my shoulder, I dashed for the spiral staircase. Below us, bedlam had broken loose, as we fled upward on the swinging stairs! The giant cat had simply run amuck. He was clawing, biting, mauling and killing every thing which dared to move. Black-robed priests, their vestments in bloody shreds, were crawling about among a mass of crumbling and falling mummies while the sabertooth leaped through the melee like an incarnated demon.

"Ahnree, won't you please put me down? I am able to walk as well as you are!"

I was decidedly pleased to comply with her request, for my injured shoulder, which had never entirely ceased to hurt, was now aching all the way up to the top of my head. But as I set her on her feet upon the step in front of me, I growled:

"I should have tossed you to the tiger—you little fool!"

"But I did not know that Baala\* was there! I have always been taught to do the dance with my eyes closed until the last veil had fallen."

"By that time you wouldn't have had any eyes!"

"Yes, I know that now."

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\* The Assyrian Bel or Phoenician Baal had many tiger characteristics. A Hittite monument shows a priest dressed in lion skins much as that one in Tah-ee's death parade was dressed, while the Maya-Kiche called themselves "Balam-Quitze" (Sons of the Tiger with the Sweet Smile). A strange series of coincidences . . . if they are merely coincidences.—Ed.

I looked up. "Tah-ee, what is that light? What makes it burn?"

"It is a gift from the ancients. But you must not look at it or your eyes will only know darkness."

"What magnificent frescoes on the walls! What city . . ."

"Ahnree, we must hurry! We still have to pass Cabrakan!"

"And who is that?"

"The earthquake monster."

I did not know why I had hung onto my torch, but as we climbed through the trap-door at the head of the stairs, I was glad that I still carried my rapidly-dimming light, for the corridor which faced us was dark indeed. For a way, the white light from below lighted a passage of huge wet stones. It was narrow. There was only room enough for one to pass.

I held the torch so that its flickering light would guide our passage through the tunnel, while behind us, our shadows danced along the walls like two absurd stilt-walkers. Sometimes the corridor was cut through solid rock, and sometimes it was lined with giant fitted stones.

One fact which caused me no end of amazement was the fact that we were descending most of the time, though there were many short ascents. In this winding maze, from which side passages led now and then into the blackness, Tah-ee hurried ahead of me, never even hesitating at these cross roads.

Suddenly my torch flickered and went out. I stopped in dismay, but Tah-ee took my hand and led me on through the blackness. Up, down and around we twisted until I began to marvel at the extent of this underground network. Where were we? Were we still under that great metropolis of the ancient world whose inhabitants left legends which persist—even to the twentieth century—of vast under-

ground ruins?

TAH-EE stopped as if listening. Instinctively I listened too, but all I heard was a deep rumbling roar from somewhere.

"Cabrakan!"

"You haven't seen this . . . boogey-thing, have you?"

"No. He usually stays at the island temple because it is open to the sun. There is a passage between it and the great pyramid—a passage under the lake. I have never been to the island temple. That is why I have never seen him."

"Of course, I hate to spoil a pet delusion, but we have learned that earthquakes are caused by faults and not by gods who live in pools. . . ."

"What are faults?"

"Great cracks in the earth's crust along which one crustal block is sliding in relation to another crustal block. But perhaps it would be just as wise to postpone this geological lesson until we are in a safer place. You stop asking questions and so will I—for the present."

We had no more than started forward again than she stopped once more.

"What's the matter now?"

"Ssh! Someone is coming!"

She was right. I could hear the slip-slip of sandals in the distance over the stone flagging before the gleam of a torch upon the wet rocks ahead was reflected from around a turn in the passage. Silently I pushed her behind me and crept up to the elbow of the tunnel.

In a moment, a figure came hurrying around the corner, and I leaped upon him. Before he had time to raise his voice in alarm, I had delivered a well-aimed blow at his jaw. As he crumpled up, I stripped off his black robe, tore it into strips and trussed him up. In the brief struggle, his torch had gone out

and therefore we did not bother to retrieve it but continued on our flight through the blackness.

After awhile I began to see, or I thought I began to see, daylight ahead, filtering dimly down what appeared to be a long flight of stone stairs. Like two shadows, we hurried with all possible speed up this flight which seemed to be endless, and slowed down only near the top because I had almost stumbled upon the extreme narrowness of the footing.

"Someone once remarked that it was death to climb the steps of Mayan temples, and what he said about the Mayas goes for . . ."

Tah-ee had put a warning finger across my mouth. Then creeping up the last few steps, she raised her head cautiously above the trap-door opening which was standing ajar. Quickly she motioned for me to follow, and hurried over the top.

We found ourselves standing in a corridor upon one side of which was a large silver door with engraved panels. Upon the other side was an open portal in which heavy blue drapes were slightly blowing. I moved toward the open one but Tah-ee shook her head and pointed at the silver door. By now I was right in front of the drapes and could see most of the room inside. Apparently it was empty. Cautiously I peered in. It was empty.

"We must not stay here Ahnree!" tugging at my mantle.

**Q**UICKLY I glanced around at the furnishings. It was not a large room but there was an air of spaciousness about it. On one side, slender black columns formed window-like openings through which the late afternoon sun poured over the mosaiced floor of pink porphyry and blue turquoise, interspersed with sapphires.

The walls, which were covered with exquisite tapestries that featured a feather of iridescent blue, found a repetition of their color motif in the woven mats which were scattered around a low table. Yet it was the table which held my eye, for upon it was a large golden dish of ripe fruits. A blue bottle-fly, buzzing noisily around the open dish, emphasized the silence.

"Ahnree, I have a strange feeling that we are being followed . . . I have listened, it is true, and have heard nothing," she added, forestalling my question.

I shrugged my shoulders and smiled, not so much to dismiss what I considered the fears induced by overwrought nerves, as the realization of the truly comical picture we made in these palatial quarters—especially me with my dirty, bedraggled tunic still flapping around my scratched knees, while an embroidered mantle worth a national indebtedness, trailed from my shoulders.

"Don't be silly. Who would be following us? You know that not one priest escaped from that maddened tiger. And as for the one we tied up—he is going to stay tied up until someone finds him." I said, eyeing the fruit with dishonest intentions.

"Which may have already happened."

My hand stopped half way to the fruit. After all, she might be right. There were so many other passages . . .

Suddenly the long-drawn, sobbing and yet animal-like scream of a woman split the silence. It came from a distance and echoed hollowly as if through innumerable corridors.

"Baala!" Tah-ee cried in terror.

We raced to the silver door. It resisted my frantic effort to throw it open, until the girl showed me that it was

built on a balance principle, moving only to steady pressure.

"But we cannot shut it against him then!"

"No. We must press through just as soon as the opening is large enough for us to squeeze through. It will hold him back for a few moments trying to make it big enough for him."

Peering cautiously over the threshold, I was amazed to find that we were facing the hollow center of a vast pyramid, the same into which I had been led a prisoner! Enormous silver bars braced the terraced halls which opened upon the central lake—for a huge green pool occupied the core of this magnificent skeleton of masonry. Into this man-made lake with its small island of rushes and swamp grasses, one could have dropped a number of ordinary city office buildings and had enough space left over for a park.

"This is the home of Cabrakan." Tah-ee whispered. "It is written that as long as he is imprisoned, Xibalba shall rule."

As we fled down the deserted dusk of the hallway, like two shades from a nether world, a thousand questions raced through my mind. What now, that the High-priest was dead, and freedom was in sight? Could we hope to escape through the city—clad in these startling garments—and with no weapons to defend our flight? Would it not be better to waylay two priests and steal their garments? While they were swimming out of that convenient pool, we might make our exit a success! But then—the tiger!

We turned the corner of the structure, passing a door in which a pair of green curtains were blowing slightly. The thought of the trailing tiger had spurred us to such flight that silence was no longer possible. Would listening ears hear our fleeing steps? We

had to take that chance!

Ahead of us was the colonnade through which daylight poured into the twilight of the interior. Yet just as my heart leaped in elation at the sight of this exit, Tah-ee pointed a slim finger down the hall behind us. Two priests were emerging from the room in which the curtains had been blowing. Their attitude suggested that they had heard our running steps and were about to start in pursuit. But farther on down the hall behind them, and as yet unsuspected by them, I saw the great silver door being pushed outward by a large furry paw!

IT was too late to hide. The priests had already seen us and there was nothing else to do but go on. The two black-robed figures raised their voices in alarm, filling the mighty structure with their shouts. Suddenly one of those shouts ended in a horrible half-choked cry of terror and agony. I did not need to turn, to tell me what had happened! The blood-curdling snarls of the tiger filled the air.

I kept on running, even though I knew that something fleeing would only infuriate the killing instinct in the cat. What else could we do? I had no torch now.

Suddenly Tah-ee stopped dead in her tracks and faced the pool with terror-stricken eyes. And pointing a trembling finger at it she whispered:

"Cabrakan!"

Half-turning, even as I slid to check myself, I felt my hair stiffen, and my eyes bulge with sheer unbelief at what I saw. Breaking the unrippled top of the pool came a huge green head—a monstrous dragon-head! I saw its horrible sword-like teeth bared in a reverberating, earth-shaking snarl, while its vicious little eyes ran down the hallway and came to rest upon the

tiger. Could I believe my eyes? They told me that I was looking upon a dinosaur! A captive tyrannosaurus \*—that meat-eating nightmare of the hot, Mesozoic jungles! The monarch of all the dinosaurs!

It was Tah-ee who succeeded in shaking me out of my paralysis.

"Ahnree, who tells me that you come from another world, but who has conquered all the terrors of mine, I know now that you are the stranger who is to overthrow the power of ancient Xibalba!"

"I won't overthrow anything if that big lizard takes it into his under-sized brain to step on me! Come, we still have a chance!"

## CHAPTER X

### The Fall of Xibalba

**R** EACHING the black colonnade, I saw a part of the stairway of the giant pyramid lay before us, and beyond that, the street with its slowly moving, sunset traffic. This was not the main magnificent stairway up which I had been led a prisoner. My memory of this side exit was confused. I only knew that stairs and the undisturbed traffic of the city lay ahead of us. Terror lay behind.

We had almost reached the bottom of the staircase, without attracting more than a few curious stares from the well-filled street, when the sounds of scratching claws flying over stone, told me that the tiger was within springing distance behind us. We were now going too fast to stop, but I tried to brace myself for the expected blow. Instead of that, the sabertooth leaped

through the air in a giant spring, his hair erect with desperation as he dashed wildly into the street.

Behind us, came a horrible, ear-splitting, thundering roar—shattering the hum of traffic into a moment of surprised silence before the crowds in the street scattered madly before the charge of the bloody-mouthed tiger. Women screamed and fainted. Men fought for the cover of a doorway. Children ran around pitifully in circles. Burdened llama trains ran blindly here and there. A pet monkey jumped to a roof-top and gibbered frantically.

Reaching the street at last, I pointed to the sea-wall where the draw-bridge was alive with a stream of slow-moving traffic. Beyond that lay the ship—and safety!

Now a tremendous crash shook the city. A huge block of masonry rolled end over end past us, missing us by a mere fifty feet and plowing its way into a near-by building.

"Look!" Tah-ee screamed into my ear, "Cabranken is getting loose!"

What I saw was utterly unbelievable. The monster had actually forced his way through the door from which we had fled. It was utterly inadequate, but that had not bothered him in the least. He had heaved himself through the masonry, which was now crumbling around him like a pyramid of chocolate bars. Then jumping free of the crashing structure, he landed in the street, crushing one house beneath a powerful hind leg as if it had been made of delicate china.

The roar of falling masonry mingled with the scream of the terror-stricken inhabitants and the bellowing thunder of the enraged dragon. The sabertooth had taken refuge on top of the palace wall and the dinosaur was attempting to pull him down.

More masonry crashed. Golden

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\* The scientific name dinosaur is compounded of two Greek words—*dino* (terrible) and *Saurus* (lizard). The tyrannosaurus is literally the tyrant-lizard.—Ed.

friezes cracked from the roofs and clattered upon terror-stricken crowds. Whole rows of columns with their heavy roofs, thundered over one another like a row of toy posts.

"Whether we escape from doomed Xibalba or not," Tah-ee said, "promise that you will not leave me!"

I could not hear her voice in the din. I could only read her lips, as with a nod of my head, I promised. Her steps were beginning to lag behind, it seemed. I put my arm around her to give her extra strength to cover the ground faster, while the detonations of falling masonry told me that the terror was coming our way.

A wild fear crossed my mind, that the frantic cat might seek my presence for protection against this demonical foe from the earth's past. I did not dare look back.

"Ahnree, they are coming! Quickly—back of this wall!"

We leaped to safety and crouched down, while I tried to hold my heavy mantle around her to shield her from I knew not what. The bridge ahead was so near and yet so far!

"We are too late now, Ahnree." I heard her say sadly.

IT was indeed true. The draw-bridge was being raised—even as fear-crazed crowds fought to climb on. Finally it swung clear, with several human figures clinging to the edge. At that moment the tiger passed us. He wasn't thinking of me. He was thinking of that bridge.

With flying claws, he fairly sailed through the air. Then crouching, he sprang. Clutching the planking with his great claws as the crowds below scattered and some of the human flies fell back, he started to scramble up the bridge toward the wall. Instantly the bridge dropped back with a crash

as those who tended it dropped their ropes and ran.

By now, however, the tiger was already upon the wall, and it mattered not that the top part of the bridge broke off and fell heavily back to earth like a wounded thing, carrying its human freight with it. The progress of the tiger upon the wall could be marked by the screams of the populace. Then something appeared beside us which caused me to pull Tah-ee closer and shrink even more completely into our little corner. It was a huge, scaly, three-toed foot!

Slowly and heavily the ponderous creature waddled in the open space beyond our little hide-away, and there it pulled in its powerful tail as it crouched for a spring.

"Can he jump?"

"Most scientists have thought so," I answered thoughtfully, "because of its kangaroo-like build . . ."

"What is a kangaroo?"

I don't believe she expected an answer. I am sure I didn't give one. It was one of those moments when time seems to lengthen out tenuously. Our eyes were fastened on the slow and deliberate movements of the monster as its tremendous muscles rippled in readiness under that green, scaly skin. Slowly it gathered itself, and then with a rush of wind, it sailed through the air. Tah-ee screamed.

"He is going to land on the sea-wall! He will break it down!" And sobbing, she turned her face against my shoulder as if to shut out the inevitable.

It was indeed, just what the giant lizard was bent on doing. The minute which followed was one of those agonizing intervals between the second when fate has stamped her seal of doom, and the ultimate drop of the curtain.

For a moment the ancient dragon sailed through the air, his magnificent

muscles working with perfect precision. I remember even finding him beautiful, as the long rays of the setting sun flashed upon his dark green scales. And then with a sickening crunch, he landed astride of what had been the giant-sea-wall. Under his weight, it crumpled slowly, like a toy dam made of pebbles might crumble under the hoof of a plow-horse. The mighty, green wall of the sea poured in through the breach.

In that first second of destruction, the water too, was beautiful. With the sunlight shining upon it as upon green glass, and the spray dashing high under the blow of the concussion, it afforded a picture of fantastic beauty.

And then with a roar, it poured upon the city, breaking more of the wall as it came. A second's vision of the green wave sweeping toy houses before it! Then it was upon us with all its relentless finality! Instinctively I held my breath. Tah-ee's arms gripped me. I heard her terror-stricken voice calling:

"Ahnree . . . stay with me! Ahnree!"

A churning, foaming, topsy-turvy world of green! I tried to hold on to Tah-ee but something ripped us apart. And once more I heard her voice—plaintive and more distant . . .

"Ahnree!"

I tried to answer. Something was bearing down on me. Something very heavy. It struck me in the jaw with a force that almost tore my head from my shoulders. As I felt the strangling green water rushing into my broken mouth and placing its smothering liquid fingers over my nose, I heard once more a plaintive voice from far . . . far away . . .

"Ahnree!"

And finally unutterable darkness . . . and silence.

**S**UDDENLY, I don't know how, I became aware of the fact that I was

breathing again. I was lying on a huge block of masonry, at the base of which the sea washed angrily. I was stiff and sore, and my almost nude body was seared red by the sun, high in the sky.

Dazed still, I staggered to my feet and gazed uncomprehendingly about. All around me lay a desolate scene; on one side the emerald-green of the sea, and on the other an incredible tumble of ruins, half submerged under the water that lashed foam about them.

Xibalba! Gone! Destroyed!

I groaned suddenly, full realization striking me with a fearful blow.

"Tah-ee!" I moaned. "Tah-ee!"

She was dead. I could not but be certain of it. For nowhere in all this desolation was visible any living thing, but myself. Tah-ee, the lovely Princess of Chan-Chan; she of the glorious white body, the emerald-green eyes, the chestnut tresses—dead! The thought crushed me, and I sank once more to the stone, clutching its scarred, carven surface with fingers that bled with the agony of my grip.

But then, as I lay there, a vision rose before me; a vision of travertine covered cliffs, of massive tablets upon whose surface still was to be seen the faint outline of indecipherable inscriptions.

Shoreline of the Salton Sea!

It was there that hope lay—sunken beneath thirty feet of water; the time seat! Far to the north, in the Gulf of California, or what would be California in twenty thousand years. Once before it had carried me into the past; once again it could carry me there—back to the time before the destruction of Xibalba.

If the time seat were brought to this spot—it would be here to rescue Tah-ee and myself before that fatal moment when we were torn from each other's arms. Its paradoxical aspects struck

me—yet, what is time? Once already I had defied its precepts . . . why not again?

And if the fates of time had decreed Tah-ee's death, no matter what my efforts . . . but I could not think of that. I *must* try it!

I stumbled to my feet, clambered

down from the great basalt block, and splashed through shallow water to the shoreline—where once was the terraced portion of the city. Then I turned my face toward the north and set out.

I will reach the Salton Sea and the time ship—or die trying.

By the Tiger God I swear it!



(Continued from page 6)

Neil R. Jones, who became famous because of his sensational Professor Jameson stories. And lastly, the ever-popular Ross Rocklynne with his most deeply moving story of them all.

OF special interest is the much-requested sequel article by Joseph J. Millard on the mysteries of the Pyramid of Gizeh. You'll find it on page 128. It deals with the amazing prophecies of the pyramid, and even your editor was impressed by the facts Millard has presented—facts we never knew were true, until now. It's an amazing article, and recommended.

PAUL'S back cover, showing a city on Uranus, is one of his most fascinating, and we think, the best since his "A City On Mars." This series is being interrupted for the May issue, to allow for his "birthday" special. But it will resume with our June issue.

ALSO, in June, John Carter returns with his third adventure. You'll be able to follow the further adventures of Carter, Pan Dan Chee, and the lovely Llana of Cathol. As usual, J. Allen St. John does the cover.

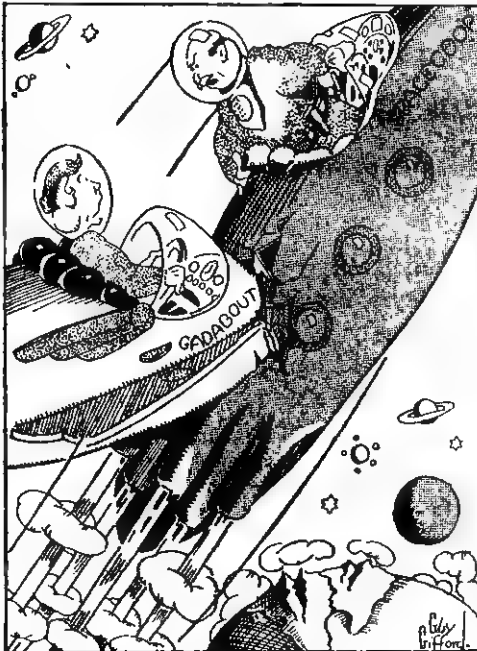
HOW about a peek into the more distant future? Well, we've got a new Polton Cross story, "The Man Who Bought Mars"; a new author to

AMAZING presents "The Earthling"—his name is Leigh Brackett; Ray Cummings is coming back with "Bandits Of Time"; Ralph Milne Farley, in collaboration with Al. P. Nelson, writes "The City Of Lost Souls"; Ed Earl Repp has penned "Armageddon, 1948"; James Norman stars with "Lost Men Of Angkor"; Festus Pragnell has a new "Interior of Mars" story; Stanton A. Coblenz rivals his "Sunken World" with a complete novel called "The Enchantress of Le-Mur" . . . but why go on? It's just treat after treat in store for you.

WRITES Raymond Washington, Jr., of Live Oak, Florida: "How are the titles placed on the cover? Well, here's our chance to do a little explaining on several points regarding covers.

First, these titles are set up in type, or lettered by an artist, and then "stripped in" on the negative from which the plates are made. The negative is placed on the metal, and by the regular processes of engraving, is etched out by means of acid.

Thus, the title appears in all three color plates, and when finally run off, appears in the desired color, depending on which colors are completely etched out, and which are not etched at all. For instance, a blue title means the blue plate is unetched in the letters, while the other two plates are completely etched out so that the letters do not register in those colors.



"Excuse me, Mister, I'm looking for the Tower of the Empire State Building."

ANOTHER request from readers is that of reproductions of cover scenes *without* titles. This is impossible, because in order to do that, entirely new plates, without the titles stripped in, would be necessary. The original plates could not be altered, once they contained the titles.

(Concluded on page 127)

# King Arthur's Knight *in a* YANKEE COURT

by A. W. BERNAL

**When Walter Amesvent sent his time swing into the past, he didn't expect to find Galahad sitting in it when it returned!**

I THOUGHT he looked familiar as he sailed past at eye-level, but you really can't recognize a guy by the seat of his pants. And that's all I see of this gent who hurtles out of the Science Building and nose-dives into the shrubs as I stroll by.

Anyway, here I am at the World's Fair, bound for the Aquacade. If you had been battling through a million exhibits all day to reach the diving girls, would you stop to watch some dope make a three-point landing in the bushes outside the Portals of Science? I didn't stop either.

Not till someone called my name.

"Hank, old man!"

Then I halt and squint back at the heaving shrubbery. Out of it, sud-

denly, with leaves in his hair, pops my former friend and fellow-time traveler: Walter Amesvent, sole inventor of the amazing (and, if you ask me, loony) Time Swing!

Now I hadn't seen Walter since he left Oakville. (Which was shortly after us two had nearly spoiled National history by yanking Paul Revere from '75 on the very day he was slated to bag the Redcoats in the fifth race. Besides, Walter and I'd quarreled about monkeying with Time and Time Swings, and I'd filed him away as squirrel fodder from then on. I'd taken an oath to do no more history-wrecking, too!)

But here was your correspondent on vacation in the World of Tomorrow, when out of the past hops Walter Ames-



"Who be ye, varlets? Be ye warlocks, or gadzooks mayhap the mighty Merlin himself?"

vent in the sorry flesh. What could I do when he grabbed my lapels, but listen?

So I listened.

I won't quote him, because nobody ever understands what an Amesvent means when he starts tossing big syllables. In clear, lucid Americanese, the eight-ball Walter was stuck behind was this:

He had met and fallen for one of the gals in the Aquacade—that little blonde in the third floating pin-wheel from the left. She'd spatting with her boss and was currently fresh out of a job. Walter had promised to help her dig up forty bucks back room-rent by tomorrow noon—to save her from being tossed out on her ear by an unsympathetic landlady. (Why Walter can't fall for a telephone girl with steady work, I dunno. But leave him alone and he'll always go to the World of Tomorrow to fall for some amphibian.)

Well, Walt had sprained a brain cell trying to rake up forty frogskins in a hurry. Naturally, with his inventive mind, he wouldn't have forty bucks himself. Oh no—he'd spent his last wampum on a new machine of his—something to fry doughnuts without either grease or dough, I gathered. I tell you, this Amesvent is an Einstein with four speeds in reverse!

Now he was direct from the Inventor's Congress in the Science Building. In fact, it was a very well known inventor's footprint I had seen autographed on Walter's pants a second earlier.

AS he told this part of the story, he unwrapped a bundle of newspapers in his lap. From his tender care I thought he was unveiling a solid diamond egg, at first. It was only a model

of that infernal Time Swing of his—that mess I had once helped him build that was supposed to romp back and forth into the Fourth Dimension. A little thing of wood and steel, halfway between a clock and a porch swing, with a dash of steam-shovel and oil-derrick for class.\*

"See?" sighed Walter sadly. "After we wrecked the big machine I built this model. It doesn't function."

"Never mind all that. Does it work?"

"No." He ran long fingers, slim and flexible as sticks of wire, lovingly over the toy on his knee. "I took this to the Inventors' Congress. I wanted to sell someone an interest in my Time Swing idea . . . forty dollars worth."

"So how?"

"They let me into the Congress all right. They listened while I explained how the Time Swing pendulum moves at right angles to everything to vanish into the Fourth. . . ."

"Yah," I interrupted politely. "And how it slides along the Road of Time—I know, I know. Get on with the plot."

"I held them spellbound. When I finished—they asked for a demonstration. I couldn't get it started at all. Hank, you've got to go over the thing and tell me—"

"Hey—you mean those scientists dumped you for no better reason than that?"

Walter gulped guiltily. "They had no other reason. Unless—unless they were annoyed when I started to pass the hat."

I snickered. Imagine one scientist trying to collect dough from a gang of others!

"Finally," Walter finished dolefully, "I tried to auction off my model Time Swing to the highest bidder for scrap metal. It was then they ejected me forcibly. And then I saw you."

I stood up. "Very sweet, Walter.

\* See *Amazing Stories* for "Paul Revere and the Time Machine," March, 1940.—Ed.

And very sad. But this is the last weekend of my vacation and I got five bucks between me and the WPA. I won't fool with no fourth, fifth, or sixth dimensions. If you want my advice on how to get forty iron men by tomorrow noon: go try bingo at your local theater. So long—nice to have seen you. If you get over by the aquapool sometime, drop in!"

Walter never laughs at my jokes. He grabbed me this time and almost began to cry. "Aw gee, Hank. You know more about machinery than Henry Ford. Please—you've got to help me. Please, Hank!"

I eyed him. I felt my heart soften.

"Okay, okay. . . . Got any ideas?"

Of course, he had. His eyes lit up like Roman candles. He took my arm. He began to spout. I trailed him out of the Fair, loath to abandon the World of Tomorrow to hear the crack-pot sob story of a guy of 1940½, Annex Dominos.

I WAS hooked. During dinner with Walter and his gal, I swore a dozen times I wouldn't go through with it; but he was so pathetic and the gal, Eunice, so darn cute, that each time I gave in. I knew nothing would work out like we planned. Yet somehow and anyway, things all managed to come out even in the end. So it was all right, I guess. . . .

Walter wanted to get the Time Swing going again. Not the model, the big one whose parts he kept in his Y.M.C.A. room in half a dozen suitcases. His brain-storm was this: That night, at the Fair, the Camelot Crispy breakfast-food exhibit was staging a prize masquerade. It was a Mardy Grassy dingus where everybody shows up in costume—only this time, in honor of the breakfast product, Camelot Crispies, the affair was a King Arthur set-up.

Nobody could be in it unless he had on a suit of armor, or was dressed like King Arthur's Round Table, or carried a dragon, or such. First prize for the best costume was to be five crates of Camelot Crispies, one gallon of fresh milk, and fifty iron men cold hard cash. Now, reasoned Walter the wild man, authenticity was the prime consideration: the bird looking most like a genuine knight of ye olden tymes would cop the half C note—and the cereal and milk with it. Walter figured we might fish in the fourth dimension with his Time Swing (IF we got it ticking), and scare up a few implements straight from the Arthurean period itself!

With an honest-to-Arthur helmet or shield, or maybe a real Camelot-stamped sword & lance outfit, Walter schemed to stagger the judges, sneak the fifty cartwheels, and hie himself to bribe Eunice's flint-hearted landlady on the morrow.

A good sounding plan, eh? I thought he was bird-brained, too. But that's genius for you—the longest way 'round is the sweetest way home for guys like Amesvent. His grey matter's got fourth dimension skids, if you ask me!

So there we were. Dredge up a robe stained with real Arthurean soup, bag the fifty, rescue the gal! Oh yeah—and MY share of the deal was to inherit the gallon of milk and the bushel of Camelot brand vitamins!

But I agreed to do it. That aquabelle, Eunice, I guess Walter told me her name was, sure had the nicest eyes . . .

WHILE I worked, sweating, hauling out coils and springs, braces and bolts, from those suitcases, and piling them on the floor, Walter explained some more. I mean, he talked. Unless he can say a simple thing in over

twenty-five sentences, Walter won't say it at all.

And since girls (even this nice Eunice) are not allowed in the Y.M.C.A., it was me who listened while Walter explained things I didn't even want to hear. With the tools I had, believe me it was tough, putting that cantankerous Time Swing together again; and I had no time to follow Amesvent on his word binge. Still, I did catch some of what he said, and in case you're interested, I'll quote—only don't ask what it means. I'm just a mechanic, not an inventor. Thank the loving Lord!

"You still don't see what I mean about the fourth dimension?" my genius nitwit friend was repeating for the sixtieth time. "Look here. Got a smoke?"

I wiped grease off my hand, scowling. "My last one. Light up and shut up. I got work to do."

"Thanks." He held it in one hand. "See, here, old squid." He pinched the cigarette between one finger and thumb. "See—this is Time."

"Don't play around. Smoke it or give it back. I'm in no mood for magical tricks."

He ignored me. "It's really elementary. Now, we both know this cigarette exists; that it *is*. Watch." Bony fingers from his other hand slid down the length of paper cylinder. "How much you see now?"

"Of that cheroot? Just the middle. Quarter inch."

Amesvent leered triumphantly. "Excellent! You perceive but one portion of this little tube. But do you claim that the rest of it no longer exists?"

"Huh?"

"No! Because you do not view the *whole* of something need not imply the non-existence of that something. *Ergo*, Time is like a smoke. . . ."

"Yeah. Once you use it up, it's gone."

"Dolt! Time is like this cigarette. The moment we live in—the moment of Now—is the part you see between my two hands. That is, ah, the *instant of focus*, let's say. We are personally aware of the existence of only that portion of Time we see—the focus instant. What we do not realize without reflection is that our focusing instant never stands still. It moves along a curve, a fourth dimensional sweep—like my fingers now along this cigarette. Constantly, the moment of Now shifts along the thread of Time. It goes one way only . . . call it forward. However—the Time Swing enables us to reach out along it in the opposite direction—*backward!*"

"Yah," I grunted, tightening a hard-to-reach flywheel. "Only it ain't backward, really—it's the fourth dimension."

Amesvent's eyes gleamed like Fourth of July sparklers. "Astute! You've caught it at last!"

"Glad you think so. Toss me that insulator."

"Another way to look at it is this." He lit the smoke and sent it hurrying into the past as far as I was concerned by sucking on it like a soda-straw. "Is this . . . Time is a river—*Now* is a boat drifting downstream with the current. The river is endless, the boat never remains still. Why is it not possible to build a boat which will fight *upstream* again? Would you dare deny the existence of a town just because your boat has passed it by? Certainly not. I have invented the Time Swing to prove you can fight upstream—back into Time itself!" \*

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\* The theory on which Walter Amesvent's Time Swing was built was based on the conception of time as a series of vibratory layers, each era vibrating at a different rate than its predecessor. Thus, by oscillating the time swing at right angles, a particular vibratory era was attuned, and it was possible to scoop objects from it.—Ed.

"Can it! I'll buy one," I groused, from the innards of the machine.

"Camelot—Sixth Century England—is a town on the Time-River. Tonight—" he rubbed his hands, gleeful as an undertaker in an epidemic—"we sail upstream to revisit her! Or rather, our Swing does."

I scratched my ear with a monkey wrench. "A cigarette that floats upstream. Very good, perfessor, pick up the marbles."

I SNORTED disgustedly to myself, and gave the last bolt its final twist. Suddenly, it struck me. "Hey, you featherwit!"

Walter gave me the look of a gorilla with stomach cramps. "Do you refer to me?"

"Looky, boss-man." I crawled from under the swaying mass of steel, wood and glass that was the Swing. "This here, brighteyes, is Flushing, a town in America, 1940. That Camelot burgh is somewhere in England—on the other side of the globe—and behind us about fourteen hunderd annums!"

"Yes?" he fish-eyed me haughtily, waiting.

"That's no short-cut!"

"Amesvent sighed. "Such stupidity. . . . My dear old onion, if you stop to think a moment, Boston wasn't in our backyard in Oakville when we found Paul Revere, was it?"

"Jeepers—that's right. How do we do it?"

That was my mistake. He began to explain again.

"I don't know what your misinformed, shrunken little brain tells you about these things, Hank," he said patiently. "But the earth has its predestined path to travel, same as any other star or planet. It's really not so simple as you might think. You know, of course, the earth is moving this very

second?"

I jumped. "Holy Smokers—*earthquake?*"

"Be serious. Now, do you think you are standing still?"

"I ain't movin'."

Walter shrugged. "Why do I do it?" He shoved me into a chair. "Pay a little attention and get educated." He began to pace up and down, rubbing those long bony fingers together as he walked.

"Each twenty-four hours the earth revolves upon itself. You grant that—or do you still maintain the world is flat?"

"Wouldn't give me no start if it was," I chirped, wiping my greasy mitts on some cotton waste.

"Very well. You, an ant upon the apple of the earth, make a complete revolution of about 24,000 miles per day, every day. That, I might say, is a speed record to be conjured with."

"I'm no ant. Not even an uncle." I was heckling, hoping to make him give up the lecture. No use.

"In addition, Cuttlebrain, the earth makes another complete revolution about the sun in a period of  $365\frac{1}{4}$  days. That makes a spiralling circle, thus far. Right?"

"You're doin' the sayin'."

"Right! Even this is not all. While we rotate on our axis, and swing about the sun, that flaming star itself is on the move. Yes! Our sun is plunging toward the fixed star Vega, in the constellation of Lyra, at the rate of *twelve miles per second!* Carrying our whole solar system with it!"

"I'm gettin' dizzy."

"And still not the end! On top of all this, the entire stellar system—of which we are the minutest of microcosmic specks—turns steadily upon an axis of its own. Do you grasp it?"

"I do. But I can't hang onto it."

"*Ergo*, you see then, to reach a point in the Past in Time—we have also to reach that point in Physical Space. The world is not where it once was. Follow me?"

I had given up; even the heckling. I shrugged.

"TO reach Pastward back to Camelot—or Arthurean England—" Amesvent doggedly continued—"one must strike through the complex series of astronomical gyrations I have just adumbrated for you, through physical Time and Space, both many years and miles."

"I don't get it. But let's do it. It gets late."

"I sum up. To retrace the actual path of this world from the 6th Century to the present one, the 20th—not in Time, mind you, but in *space* alone—would be an arduous task for even a master mathematician. Like myself. Fortunately, I have compensators on the Swing which perform most of my calculations for me with fine precision, capable only of a mechanical brain."

He closed in on the machine.

"So—I set the dials, according to the compilations I have here before me—and—I hope—" Amesvent was setting pointers, sliding rheostats, punching little buttons—"point the Time Swing toward 6th Century England." He folded his sheets of figures and returned them to the pocket he had drawn them from. Then he turned to me, rubbing his hands again. "We are now ready. Not laboriously to forge a weary path backward over countless billions of time-miles. Oh, no. By our miraculous, fourth-dimensional Swing—which you see before your eyes—we simply cut the Gordian knot of Time, take a short cut through space—reach *into, through, and beyond*, and see what we can bring back."

"Whew!"

"Let us hope," muttered the verbal drooler, "we bag a nice specimen of armor, a shield, helmet, or other trapping. I *do* need that fifty dollar prize."

"Come on boss-man," I urged. "Step on the gas. Let's Swing it!"

There we were . . . ready for a second pilfering from the cashbox of Time—as Walter himself put it. The Time Swing, its grotesque pendulum hanging between those same old rickety supports, gleaming with as many colored lights and knobs as a nickel slot-machine, looming over us like a drunken mechano toy grown big, gave me a twinge in the region of the old pump. By Jeepers, it was our rig—the loving labor of Walter's brain and the proud product of my own good sweat. I couldn't help patting her sides. Good old Time Swing.

"Ready, now. Hang onto those supports like mad—but stand clear of the cage!"

I stood clear pronto—no more time-traveling for this chicken!

Walter, muttering as he made a last check-up, abruptly flashed me an anticipatory grin, and clicked a row of toggles. "She's away, Hank! All aboard for the Sixth Century!"

"Camelot—here we come!"

IT was a thrill, even to me. To stand there, watching that pendulum, with the cage on its end, begin its slow, rhythmic sweep to and fro under all that groaning framework. To feel the supports shudder with eerie strain, and to watch the Swing vanish in acceleration until it was a bluish, blurred arc of speed. To gawp at it while it slid—like shifting gears on an auto—from left to right to a queer sideways direction, and then on to the weird *new* (that infernally mysterious Fourth!) direction. . . .

Then my eyes went cross-eyed try-

ing to follow her, and the next second the cage had vanished from sight!

A long moment of groaning straining ensued, while Walter and I clung like barnacles to the framework to keep the Swing steady. Then a sighing, a creaking, a gradual slowing, and at last a stopping . . .

The Time Swing was back in 1940. With a capture!

Amesvent's eyes blew up in his face like suddenly inflated balloons. You coulda got hold of mine and twisted 'em with a monkey wrench.

We had been luckier than we had ever dreamed. To help us win our fifty bucks, we had not only gone dragnetting through ancient history—we had managed to dredge up a real, genuine, honest-to-Arthur, all-metal, chromium-trim *knight*!

I pinched Walter. He pinched me. We both reached over and pinched *him*. *He* yelped.

He was real!

With a toss of his head, to clear it, the man in the cage of the Swing made as if to crawl out. Groggily, he clamped big gauntlets on the pendulum and struggled to ease out to the floor. Walt and I both helped.

That gezabo was heavy! Tied up in a shining suit of armor, from the top of his good-looking bronzed head to the soles of his narrow little feet, our prize from the Past was no lightweight. He had on a peculiar bucket-shaped helmet with a kind of bedraggled plume on it, a battle-dented cuirass, chain-mail skirt, iron legs, and gnome-pointed metal spats that had jangling spurs at the heels. In one hand he clutched the hilt of a mighty sword that was holstered at his left side. In all, not a boy you'd care to get tough with in a back alley.

With the clank of a vintage Ford on a cobblestone street, the knight finally

stood erect between Walter and me. I held tight to the arm on my side for a second, staring at his sharp-featured profile, his steel grey eyes, the ancient scar on his cheek, his short tight-lipped mouth. It was a better tableau than any I'd seen in the Fair Exhibits.

Naturally, it was Amesvent who first found his voice.

"Good evening, sir," he greeted gently.

THE human sardine-can jerked nervously, rattling like a bucket in a well. Slowly he pivoted his odd-shaped helmet, taking in first Walter and then your obedient servant.

"God ye good even, gentle men. Whither hail ye that ye wear such strange raiment?"

A metal-backed glove jingled out and flipped at the collar of my polo shirt. Cold steel fingernails sent a shiver through me as they touched skin.

"Get me a can-opener, Walter," I said, annoyed at the criticism of my glad rags. They were new and cost plenty. "Mister, when we open you up I bet you're a scream, too, in iron bvds!"

"Take it easy, Hank. He's strange—he means no offense."

The tin can from Yesterday cocked an ear at our dialogue.

"Prithee, whence such barbarous dialects? Be ye Arthur's subjects?"

I'd learned from previous experience there's just one way to handle cases like this. Shoot the truth and let 'em figure it out for themselves.

"Looky, Iron Man," I explained lucidly, "this is America—a place that ain't been discovered in your day. This ain't King Arthur's Court, back in the good old 6th. This is the Y.M.C.A. on Merling Street, Flushing, New York. And the correct time by courtesy your local station is 1940 daylight savings.

Does that penetrate that coal-skuttle you wear for a hat?"

"Hank—he didn't mean to insult your clothes," Walter pried in.

The helmeted figure let his mouth go slack. When he spoke again, there was awe and respect in his tone. "Merlin?" he whispered. "Didst say the name *Merlin*?"

"Merling branch of the—" I began, when Amesvent—who was doing some fast thinking—cut me out.

"Don't confuse him," the genius without jack hissed at me. Then, to our chromium-plated visitor: "Aye—Merlin's street. You stand before the portals of his castle. We are his men."

The knight bowed low—his metal pants creaking like a rusty gate.

"Better change your oil, pard," I cracked, to show I bore him no hard feeling.

The guy in tin ignored me. "Sir," he said to Amesvent, "I, a humble knight of Arthur's realm, do bend the knee before the fame and glory of the mighty man of magic, Merlin the Great." And down on one knee he went!

"Rise, Sir Knight." Amesvent was eating this up—the dog. I saw through his scheme, knowing the typical Amesvent brainfags. Kid old tin-suit along, peel him out of his chromium, duck over to the Crispy Masquerade in it, cop the fifty bucks with *genuine* Arthurean armor and ship our jaybird of Time back into the history books in one-two order. The luckless dope would-be run through his paces and slipped back into memories before he ever caught on. Oh, well—it was all for the lovely Eunice. I couldn't blame Amesvent much.

"Rise, Sir Knight," he was declaiming, rolling his voice like a radio announcer's. "I, Sir Walter, and my fellow wizard, Sir Hank, do greet you—*thee*."

"Be ye true wizards?" Tin-suit

clanked to his feet again.

Walter flashed me a look. "Aye. Assistant-wizards to Merlin."

I slipped Walter the wink. "Aye, aye, sire. And what is thy monicker, me bucko?"

THE little man—and I was surprised to see that he really was a little gent—unbuckled his tin hat and yanked it off. His fair, blondish-brown hair was matted and awry from being canned so long. His white forehead had a crease across it where the helmet lip had pressed. The rest of his face was Indian-red from sun, and a wiry stubble dotted his cheeks and chin. His leather pan was like a cowboy's, I decided. A quick look at his bow legs told me I was not far wrong in my size-up.

With ceremony, the man tucked his iron bonnet beneath one arm, shucked the mailed gauntlet from his woman-small right hand, and extended the bare fin in a kind of salute.

"They call me Galahad, of the Table Round—errant knight in the service of his Royal Majesty, my leal liege Arthur, King of Britain. Thy pleasure, sire."

I flipped the boy scout salute back at him. "Gotcha, kiddo!"

"Hank!" Walter shoved me behind him. There was a new look on his freckled phiz. "Cut the comics—don't you know who he *is*?"

I groaned. "We haven't bagged another hero?"

"Hank—his name! His name, Hank!"

"What of it? Where I come from, plenty guys called Gala—" I stopped, fresh out of words. Then I yawped it. "*Galahad!* Great jumping jeepers! GALAHAD!"

The little brownish man looked at us mildly. "Aye. Sir Galahad of Camelot. Know thou me?"

I couldn't utter a squeak. Amesvent

took over. But even he stuttered a little. "B-by reputation, only, Sir Knight. W-we did not expect—I mean, it's a pleasure . . ." He fumbled, blinked, swallowed. "Sir Galahad in person! Ah . . . won't you take off your iron and sit down?"

I don't know how long we would have stood there, the three of us, eyeing each other like kids in front of the new teacher, all gawping and self-conscious. Then the clock struck and saved us.

Sir Galahad started when the wall clock began to bong.

"Magic?" He gestured with his plumed helmet at the wall.

"Aye, magic. . . ." Amesvent's eyes sought mine and traveled back to the clock-face. Nine p.m. The grand prize award for the best King Arthur costume was slated for 10:30.

"Work fast," I whispered. "I'll agree to anything you cook up."

Amesvent, first-assistant to Merlin the super-magician, turned to Galahad of Camelot. "Sir Knight—wouldst lend thee aid in—in helping us out?"

"Sire?" The knight scratched his nose, puzzled.

I seconded the thought. "Sir Galahad," I made up from what I remembered from school books, "your specialty is lendin' helping hands to gals in distress, ain't it?"

Galahad smiled nicely. "I have lent my right arm to free a maiden," he admitted. "And I have championed Lady Tolembroke in a tourney or two at Camelot. But, at present, my quest is of a different nature. I seek the famed Holy Grail. Hast word of where the Grail may me? Arthur seeks it through his trusted servant, my humble self."

**D**URING this speech I got a kick from Amesvent, plus a shove to the rear. The Mastermind had plans

of his own. I gave up, and let him have the jockey-seat.

He had himself lined up, too. "Sir Knight," he went straight to the point, "I, Sir Walter, have great and immediate need for thy suit of armor and thy trusty sword."

"My sword?" The tin man clutched the hefty meat-axe at his side. "Never—unless it be my own hand wields it."

"A maiden beloved of me is in dire peril, Sir Galahad," Walter purred on. "From her parlous predicament wouldst I rescue her. From yon tower, beast-guarded—" here he gestured ambiguously—"I would free her. My own war clothes are—are being welded. I need armor—for this one deed of der-ring-do. Please, gracious servant of noble Arthur, lend thine armor!"

By now this crackpot Walter Amesvent was on his own bent knee before Galahad, arms outstretched like a Mammy singer's.

Galahad was dubious. He wrinkled a thoughtful brow, and tried to reach a finger through a chink in his mail breastplate to get at an itch.

"If—" he slowly drawled—"I were sure thou wert as thou sayest. . . . Yet, forsooth, being both stranger men to me, it is not meet I should lend thee my trappings."

This was what Amesvent had been waiting for. "Look, Sir Knight. If, by magic, I make appear the—the image of the prisoned maid of whom I quoth . . . wouldst then lend thine armor, sir?"

"Peradventure. . . ." This boy was from Camelot, Missouri!

Amesvent pushed me out of the way. "Sit still while I conjur some of Merlin's own specialties," he warned.

Like a madman, then, he leapt about the room. Muttering abracadabra in a drooling stream, Amesvent put on his act of magic.

First he whipped out a mirror. Gala-

had jumped a foot at sight of his own reflection. Then Amesvent lit a series of matches, scratching them on the wall, on his teeth, with his thumbnail, on the seat of his pants. Next, with a pass or two, he switched the bedlamp on and off, started an electric fan, moved the clock-hands till a premature ten o'clock struck. After that he turned on the radio, got speech first and then dance music.

Finally, with a hocus-pocus flourish and a cry of: "*Nationalbiscuitkalamazoozipperfrigidaireperisphercellophane!*" he finagled in a drawer and waved aloft a snapshot of Eunice the lovely mermaiden.

Cringing in his sardine container, the dazzled Sir Galahad tried to focus unbelieving eyes on this climactic feat of wizardry.

"By the sword of Arthur!" he bleated, getting the range of the photo. "Where do I find this beauteous creature?"

"That's not the point," hedged Amesvent, tucking Eunice's bathing-suited form out of sight again. "She's the one trapped in the tower. Wouldst lend thy armor to me—est, to save her from evil?"

"By the Table Round of Camelot—YES!" cried Galahad thumpingly, clanging a mailed fist against the helmet in his other hand for emphasis.

**M**ERE seconds later, Sir Galahad stood in his peculiarly woven drawers, befuddledly watching Amesvent wrap up half a ton of scrap iron in old newspapers.

"I'll put these on in the men's room at the Camelot Crispy Exhibit," he whispered to me. "Keep our friend quiet till I get back—and don't let him out of your sight!"

And he was gone. . . .

At a few minutes before ten I reached the end of my patience. I was pacing

up and down the little room, while Galahad, huddled in a sheet, sat on the bed staring solemnly at me. Conversation had long since gone down the drain—I couldn't talk horses, prize fights, politics, or swap jokes with this guy. What does 1940 have to say to Sixth Century England?

So, in mutual boredom, he sat and I paced.

It was about 9:55 when I thought of telling him about the World's Fair. No go. He didn't savvy it at all.

Then I got this hunch. Why should Walter Amesvent have all the fun of this thing, anyway? The least we could do for Sir Galahad would be to give him a little memory of his trip through the centuries. I decided I would.

With me, action is carbon copy to thought. I tore into Walter's closet and flung out a bundle of Amesvent rags.

"Howja like to see some *real* magic?" I asked the man from fourteen centuries back.

His eyes glistened. "Dost thou meanest—at the inner court—Mighty Merlin himself?"

"I mean at the good old Yankee court at the good old World's Fair in good old Flushing, New York, U.S.A.!"

"Magic-sounding names!" he cried in hushed tones. "O Mighty Merlin!"

"Just hop in those duds and we'll take a peek, me bucko."

He hemmed, fingering the suit I'd tossed him. "Prithee, what is thy meaning, warlock?"

"Toss on those burlaps and follow me."

This was colossal! Galahad—a knight of Arthur's realm—visiting the Fair! The Man From Yesterday loose in the World of Tomorrow! I began to flame with my idea. Holy Smokers!

"Okay, we're set," I told him, clapping, Walter's too-big hat over the knight's tousled thatch of hair, stuffing

shoulder long locks up inside it. "Hide that sissy stuff."

I gave him a quick once over. He looked sloppy—like a kid in his big brother's clothes. But it was night; he'd pass.

"You look fine. Shall we shove off?"

He peered at me from under the flopping fedora. He grinned.

"Aye, warlock—shove off!"

"We're on our way!"

TO say Galahad was flabbergasted when we rode to the Fair Grounds by train is an understatement. He was collapsed! In the first place, when he saw our train come rolling into the Merling station, the knight squalled for his sword. He thought the thing, with its glaring headlight and shrill whistle, was a man-eating dragon on the charge!

He didn't talk much during the trip. It was just as well, seeing how badly he spoke English, being a foreigner, kind of. That phony lingo of his was sure terrible. So we traveled in comparative silence till we piled out at the fancy gateway to the World of Grover Whalen. I had to pry his fingers off my arm and then off the arm-rest of our seat, and half-drag him down the aisle, to make him debark. For a knight used to kayoing dragons, this boy was pretty terrified at a garden-variety electric train.

But all this was forgotten in a moment as we stepped inside the Fair itself.

I thought my knightly pal would keel over, or at least that his peepers would roll right out on his cheeks. They beamed big as searchlights as he let 'em rove from building to building in that big place. As far as the gaze could stretch, we saw those familiar structures, built like movie sets for an Alice in Wonderland. Fountains, gardens, the looming ball and spire in the dis-

tance, the glitter and glamor of the brightlights on the Midway. . . . Well, Galahad really got his money's worth in that one first, brain-whirling stare of his. He came quietly to me after a second, slipped one of his smallish hands in mine, like a child. When I looked down, I could see his knees shaking inside his baggy pants!

"C'mon—it's for laughs." I gave him a tug toward one of the waiting motor-chairs. I still had a little jack left, and my heart began to soften at the hard luck of any poor guy who had to spend his life lost in those musty days when he-men rode nags and never had movies, or screeno, or even hot dogs. So I wanted to give him all the thrills I could before we found Amesvent.

At this time of night, the thrills were all over at the far side of the Fair on the Midway. I pointed it out to him as we sped through the long thoroughfares of exhibit buildings—way ahead of us, glittering like the jewels in Queen Guinevere's Sunday crown.

The misplaced knight almost broke his neck, twirling his head back and forth as we rolled past the immense perisphere and the needlelike trylon, the odd-shaped Swift building, the giant framework of Petroleum's oil derrick, and up at last over the Empire State Bridge—into Fairyland.

"Merlin's Court!" he kept gasping as we wheeled along. "The Yankee Court of Mighty Merlin! Unbelievable! Enchanting!"

As we hit the New York State exhibit and left our motor-chair for some footwork, something happened that nearly sent Galahad racing out of the grounds like a streak of lightning late to strike.

The ten o'clock fireworks on Liberty Lake began with a boom!

"Demons!" yelled Galahad, springing into the air as if struck with a hat-pin. "Morgan Le Fay!"

"Who?" I looked about, startled.

"Wicked Queen Morgan—the enchantress!" He pointed at the blaze of yellow and red that was veining the blue sky overhead. "Spells—witchcraft!"

But when I had calmed the visiting ironman down somewhat, he relaxed into enjoyment. He oh-ed and ah-ed like a native American as rockets burst and colored balls of fire parachuted, and the pin-wheels whirled and the crackers popped and the band played marches.

"Camelot, I pledge, has no wonders like these of Merlin's!" he sighed admiringly, as a big American flag appeared in the sky by means of an intricate fleet of rockets, all exploding and settling down to earth together. He watched the stripes and stars wink slowly out, then turned to me. "I bend the knee to the glories of Mighty Merlin!"

I laughed. Merlin would have been a piker compared to Mr. Whalen. But I humored him. "Right. It's Merlin's Gayway—his Yankee Court of a million amazements, as the barkers say." I clapped him on the back. "Hoist up your britches and wade on in. It's for us!"

Believe me, it all was.

FOR half an hour, I loaded Galahad with ice cream cones—which astounded him—hamburgers—which delighted him—and gave him chances on the games. We won two kewpies, a ham, a pack of cigarettes. He leapt half out of his loose pants when I opened the smokes and commenced to puff on one. . . .

We rode the auto-dodgems—and he never even got his car started. He fainted dead away in the parachute leap—and then went back for three more rides. We passed Jungland—and Galahad wanted to take a crack at

"dragons and beasties of the nether regions, meant to test a man's right arm."

I had to drag him off the Comet Ride, and I needed four attendants to pry him loose from the Cyclone Coaster after I had spent my last two bits giving him his fifth trip on that hurtling roller-coaster. He called it a tamed griffin—and *loved* it. But when, out of dough, he kept screaming for more rides, they threw us out for drunks. . . .

Then I found a fifty-cent piece near the penny arcade, and let him blow it on tackling the nickel slot machines. He well-nigh went mad. When I finally dragged him away, nickel-less but nutty, his eyes were spinning like Liberty Lake pinwheels. He'd watched those whirling little steel balls until his eyes refused to stop.

About this time, Sir Galahad, Knight of the Table Round, errant knight in service to Arthur of Camelot, got sick from too much ice cream, soda pop, spun cotton candy, ferris wheel rides, and slot machine hypnosis.

I took him to the washroom and helped him get well. We were scrubbing up afterward, and the knight from 'way back was finding his legs steady under him once more, when who should we run into but the ambling Amesvent himself.

He passed us on his way out, muttering to himself, and hauling a clanking, paper-wrapped bundle in his arms. We hailed him, and asked how he had fared in the Camelot Cereal contest for masquerading knights.

He glowered at me, swore a little at Galahad for soiling his best suit, and then explained everything to us in two short, expressive words: "No Go!"

"Whaddya mean?" I asked. "No prize money?"

The sole inventor and originator of the wonderful one-horsepower Time

Swing spat. That was still not enough comment for me. I asked further questions. Walter only shrugged, jerked his head. "Come—Eunice is waiting for me to change into my own clothes. The contest is over, but Camelot Crispies is still throwing some sort of free shindig. Maybe you'd like to show your friend here the brand of knights put out in 1940."

"Hey, give out, Walter. What happened?"

**B**UT it was not till the mopy inventor took us to Eunice, the lovely aquabelle, that we got the story. It came from her luscious lips; Amesvent was too disgusted to talk.

(Let me state right here that if Eunice was impressed by meeting the McCoy Sir Galahad, it was nothing to how the tin man reacted to meeting up with a dry-docked mermaid. I thought we'd have to oblige him by producing a dragon for him to slay on the spot, just so's he could impress her more. And flattery! That man's tongue was oily as a gigolo's hair-do. Amesvent, griped already, got sore and—. Oh, well let's just say Sir Gally and Eunice got on fine, and get on with history. . . .)

Anyway, Eunice told us Walter had met with trouble in the first place, trying to put himself into Gally's rusty soup and fish.

"Walty says," she explained, "that Man as a species has added several inches to his height since the age of King Arthur. Diet, he says. Sir Galahad here, while a big fellow for his own day, is below average for our time. . . . It's silly, isn't it, to think that Richard the Lion-Hearted, and even the bold Lancelot, were probably little shorties no taller than me!"

I was amazed. "You're kidding."

She wasn't. Walter emerged from sub-zero gloom a moment to confirm

her statement. "When I tried to squeeze into that armor I couldn't even fasten on the breastplate, much less put on the pants, or chaps, or whatever you call the darn things."

"So," Eunice prattled on quickly, "he entered the contest in plain clothes, with only Sir Galahad's helmet on. He told them he was a wandering, disinherited knight, incognito for reasons of state. They didn't like him. They laughed at his helmet and called it a dirty old bent-up coal scuttle."

"Yeah?"

"Uh-huh." Her big brown eyes were wide and serious. "The man who got the prize was all shiny in—" she pointed a crimsoned fingernail. "Look—there he goes now!"

We were huddled opposite the entrance to the Camelot concession. From it now strode a big palooka done up in polished tin. The fake didn't even rattle as he walked. He had cut his suit out of aluminum-colored cardboard; and over it had been draped a cerise and puce cape with tassels and a fringe. On his fat head sat an empty carton of Camelot Crispies, with a turkey feather stuck in its top!

"Toss your glims on that," I nudged Galahad. "He's a knight from this phony court."

Galahad didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "That varlet is no knight. A lackey, mayhap, but no knight." I had to tell him I was joking. How could I explain what Hollywood has done to history?

"Look at those fools enjoying themselves in there," sneered Walter, morosely thumbing toward the crowded cereal pavilion. Inside, a knightly host of masqueraders were trucking to the strains of the Beer Barrel Polka. "Eunice is to be flung out on the street for lack of rent money—and a man is laughed to scorn by thick-witted judges

when he tries to earn an honest penny. And all the while, America dances in the streets!" He groused on for a while, then wound up: "Come, Eunice, let's go to your place and think. There *must* be some way to raise a puny fifty dollars. . . ."

THEY trickled off toward the cars. Suddenly I felt like I'd been tossed out of the parachute drop without a chute. I just remembered I had spent my all—even what we'd found—in the penny arcade. I didn't even have car-fare home.

"Hey, Walter . . ."

Eunice turned him around.

"Walter—I thought you were going to win the prize money," I yammered. "Gally and me spent. . . ."

The Amesvent hands wavered a gesture of despair. "Don't say it. . . . You spent your last dime on hot dogs and candy!"

"Yeah. . . . Only—"

"Never mind." Wearily, he came back to me. "Eunice, how much in your purse? Hank, empty your pockets. If we pool our resources, we may avoid having to stay here all night."

Emptied pockets and upturned purse yielded to Walter's open palm just barely enough for three tickets to town. Amesvent looked at me accusingly. "Somebody's got to stay here, marooned."

Tears were welling in Eunice's eyes. I felt a fool—to be causing more trouble instead of helping Eunice out of hers. . . . "Gosh, Walter," I floundered. "Maybe Gally here has an idea . . ."

I turned around. And nearly fell over.

Galahad, the man we'd borrowed from Yesterday, was gone!

Walter's thin fingers dug into my arms like the tines of a fork.

"Where'd he go, Hank? Great

Scott—he can't be left loose here!" His face was sickly green in the light of neons. "We owe him to Time—he belongs to history!" He broke off, gulping. "Why—why, if anything should happen to him, what would become of his descendants? Hank—on account of us, all the now living descendants of that man are liable to be wiped out of existence overnight, from the Sixth Century on down!"

"Jeepers!" I was a broken man already.

"Now, Walty . . ." It was Eunice, calm as the breeze across the Lagoon of Nations. "Don't lose your head. Let's look for Sir Galahad. He can't be far."

Naturally, she was correct. We were just figuring how the three of us could spread out in four directions, when I spotted the sagging trousers that clad the immortal flesh of one of our leading knights errant.

"Thar he blows! Crowding into the cereal pavilion!"

"What in thunder does he see?" cried Amesvent, sighting our prey. "Look at that expression."

Walter joined me and we shoved through the weirdly costumed folks dancing in the street to the music from the Camelot juke-box. Eunice tagged along as best she could. For the moment we had forgotten her.

Sir Galahad had a look on his pan we couldn't figure out. Like he was looking right straight back to his own fireside—at something he knew well and was pleased and excited over. And this in the World of Tomorrow!

WE caught up with his flapping coat just as he pressed through to the first line of spectators crowding the roped-off floor of the pavilion. He was some sight, standing there, leaning on that rope. His, or rather Walter's, hat

had been shoved down over his ears, and a few strands of that long silky brown hair was hanging down his neck like the tail of a coonskin cap. His coat sleeves had rolled down from the impromptu cuffs I'd made him and both his small, ladylike hands were hidden. His feet were out of sight, too, with his oversize pants hanging at a perilous half-mast about his thighs.

Nobody noticed him at all. All eyes, like Galahad's sparkling own, were fixed on the center of the cleared space inside the Camelot Crispy arena.

No wonder.

Galahad had found something real to him at last. The closing feature of the knighthood masquerade was evidently a mock-tournament. What Galahad and the rest of the excited mob kept eyes glued on were two big bruisers trying to mount skittish truck horses.

"What goes on, Walty?" Eunice breathed from behind us, not able to see.

"A joust!" he answered, shoving her into front-line position. "Those two professional wrestlers are, I imagine, going to tilt in the arena. No wonder Sir Galahad feels at home."

"What mugs," I commented, watching Greaseball Tommy struggling with his nag. I'd seen the Greaseball wrestle over at the Sports Building that afternoon. He'd been disqualified for thumbing his opponent's eye and biting him on the calf. He was two degrees up from the apes, and probably more at home in a tree than on ground even so. The other mauler, who was having a hard time squeezing a cauliflower ear into a tinny-looking helmet, was also a loan-out from the Sports Center. An iron bar bender, or something—I remembered his face (who could forget it!) from earlier that day, too. "Phonies," I grunted. "Probably got the fight fixed already."

Just then, on his gigantic white plug—also a loan-out, from a milk wagon, I imagine—Greaseball Tommy pranced over to our side of the roped-off square. He clasped hands over his head, ring-fashion, and leered a toothless grin at the mob. Out of the corner of my eye I saw Galahad reach out to gently pat the old truck horse straddled by the muscle man. The knight from Arthur's Camelot was oblivious of everything and everyone except the two phony knights from the Camelot Crispy vaudeville show.

"A joust, ladeez and gents," bally-hooed the master of ceremonies through a P.A. system. "A genuwine tournament tilt! Sir Lancelot, there on the white horse, will break a lance with his noble rival knight errant—the mysterious Black Knight of Camelot!"

THE crowd applauded. The two beefs goaded their mounts in a brief parade about the arena. The "mysterious" Black Knight put on his crested helmet that had a piece of silk streaming from it, reading **BUY CAMELOT CRISPIES, THEY'RE COLOSSAL.**

"The prize for this encountah," snarled the loudspeaker now, "will be this genuwine silver loving cup! To the man first unseating his opponent by the point of his lance! Gennelmun—are you ready?"

Greaseball Tommy had reined in close beside the spot where our Sir Galahad stood, again. Galahad was studying him strangely.

A fanfare of trumpets sounded. The Black Knight lowered his visor, reached down for the long stick of silvered wood that was supposed to represent a lance. "Sir Lancelot," the Greaseball, lowered his own visor, in turn, and hoisted up a big tin shield.

"When the trumpets sound again,

ladeez and gennelmun—"bawled the loudspeaker—"the great tournament will begin!" He belowed on. I didn't listen. Something peculiar was going on between Greaseball Tommy and the real knight. I pressed closer to draw Galahad back from the ropes. I was getting uneasy.

I reached Galahad as he said something angrily to the mounted wrestler. I pulled at his arm, but he shoved me away.

"Gadzooks, lout!" I heard his clear voice denounce the Greaseball. "Thou'rt not the noble Lancelot. By my troth, thou'rt a rank imposter!"

"Huh?" The Greaseball batted dull eyes down at his heckler. "Scram, drunk, I'm busy."

"Knavel! Caitiff knight!"

Scared now, I took hold of Gally's sleeve again. He turned a fiery face to mine. "Oh, 'tis Merlin's agent!" he cried joyfully then. "Swounds! I wondered if thou wert to let this vassal parade as a nobleman! Unhorse him with a spell."

"Take it easy, Gally," I whispered, looking for Walter.

"Dismount, scoundrel!" Galahad was grabbing for the Greaseball's reins. "Down, leech! To the stables where thou belongest!"

Greaseball Tommy—never a staggering mental giant—was losing all the patience his one-tube brain contained. He jerked the horse out of Galahad's reach, cursed him roundly, and pranced off to the center of the arena where the Black Knight indolently awaited him.

"Back, base knave! Dare not dishonor a noble name!" screamed the really sore Galahad at this point. I tried in vain to shush him.

"Get your drunk buddy out of here," growled somebody in the crowd at my elbow. "You two birds are trouble-

makers!"

Further squabbling was cut short by the blast of trumpets. And the joust was on!

THE two awkward "Knights," neither knowing anything about horses except to bet on them at the track, brought their charges amiably together. They milled gently about, jabbing mildly at one another with the wooden lances, flourishing their tinny shields.

A raucous laugh broke out. It was our Galahad!

"Ho ho ho ho!" he snorted, very audibly. "Thou ridest like an old woman, false knight! Thy joints creak; thy brain's sluggish as a pig's!"

The crowd began to titter. Maybe this was part of the show! Galahad, in his borrowed clothes, looked like comic relief to them.

I looked back for Walter and Eunice. The crowd had cut us off from them. They began pressing tighter, enjoying the Rube-comedy.

Greaseball Tommy was not enjoying it. He turned his thick head toward us and bellowed through his helmet: "Get that monkey outta here! I'll come over and bust his—"

His tirade broke off as the wood stick of the Black Knight—who had decided to seize opportunity when it came—clipped the Greaseball on the back of his scone.

"Blank - blank - blank - blank-blank-blank-BLANK!" mouthed "Sir Lancelot," as the blow on his tin-sheltered dome rang like a Chinese gong. "That hurt, you—"

He wheeled his white charger, dropped his stick, raised his tin shield in both hamlike fists, and banged it down on the Black Knight's cranium.

The crowd howled with joy. The Black Knight, his cardboard helmet

staved in like a paper bag hit with a baseball bat, groaned a mighty groan and slid off his horse to bite the dust. He hit the dirt like a loaded coal sack, and lay still.

The mirth of the mob rose steadily as two flunkies dodged under the ropes and helped the fallen Black Knight of Camelot Crispies to stagger ignominiously from the field of honor. And above them all, the cackle of the genuine Sir Galahad trumpeted, clear and piercing, full of mockery and scorn.

Greaseball Tommy, rubbing his head sourly, heard him. Singling out that hearty guffaw which seemed to lead the entire chorus, the scowling giant nosed his mount to the ropes. He glared down into the laughter-reddened face of the Man from Yesterday.

"What's so funny, flea-wit?" the Greaseball savagely demanded.

Galahad winked tears from his eyes. "When knaves play as knights—" he choked through a spasm of delight—"jousting becomes a fools' festival!"

"Huh?" Greaseball Tommy tried to dismount, but his feet were entwined in his stirrups. He attempted a wild haymaker with the edge of his shield.

Chuckling, Galahad ducked easily. "Clumsy jester!"

The big man tried again, and missed.

"Unseemly oaf!"

**B**Y now, Greaseball Tommy was raging like a steam boiler that has no safety-valve. When that explosion came, I wanted to be far away. But when I seized hard on Galahad's baggy coat, the wiry little guy slid out of it entirely. With the coat in my hands I flew backward, tripped, and went down. I supported part of the milling crowd on my face.

It was minutes before I could get to my feet again. By that time the picture had changed amazingly.

I don't know, even now, how it came or who suggested it—whether Galahad or somebody in the mob. Probably the knight himself. Anyway, the cry had got around that the nervy little egg was willing to take on Greaseball Tommy in a real tilt, right here and now!

"I offer my right arm in the service of the *true* Sir Lancelot, a nobleman and my companion in arms!" Galahad was yelling, when I found my feet once more. "Creature of evil magic, loutish knave, villainous impostor—be what ye may, I'll unhorse thee or my name be not Sir Galahad!"

"Listen to the guy spiel!" screamed the ecstatic crowd of spectators. "Galahad—that's rich! Take 'im, little man!"

"Smear him, Greaseball!" roared another contingent. "Cut 'im off at the roots, Tommy!"

It was like a football game. They were chanting, yowling, goading at the top of their many lungs.

I was at a loss. But then I sighted Amesvent shoving into the scene. He whispered briefly to the master of ceremonies, who had arrived to pounce on the Galahad-in-borrowed-clothing.

". . . sorry . . ." I heard Walter's apology come in fragments . . . tip-sy. . . ."

Then my ears almost dropped off. "No, no, man!" cried the M.C. to Amesvent. "Why, this is great! Don't apologize—it's marvelous!"

Walter's eyes began to protrude. "You—you mean you *want* him to joust with your slap-happy mug?"

"I do!" the M.C. beamed. "Camelot Cereals will be made! Look—those men writing like mad over there are reporters. Reams of publicity! Let the little fellow alone—let him take on the Greaseball if he's got the guts!"

"But he's too small—!" Walter's cry went unheeded.

"Do you wish," asked the M.C., turning to Galahad himself, "to prepare yourself—or will you joust the way you are?"

"Put 'im on a horse!" blared Greaseball Tommy through his toothless jowls. "Set 'im up on the nag so I can level 'im off! Just set 'im up, that's all I ask!"

"Let's get going!" chanted the mob. "We wanna touchdown!"

Galahad seized the paper parcel that Amesvent had been toting. He ripped it open, hauled out his own helmet and breastplate. He slipped into the old-time steel vest, stuffed his brown head into the tarnished iron kelly.

Walter, seeing matters had gone too far, tried to plead with the little man. "You can't fight this bruiser! You're Galahad, not Jack the Giant Killer! He's got reach, weight, bulk, muscle on you . . . he'll make mincemeat of you!"

"Let 'im alone!" protested the crowd. The merrymakers still half-figured it was part of an act. But they were hungry for action—not to mention blood. "Get on your horse, man!" they urged.

**G**ALAHAD, efficiently buckling the straps of his breastplate, smiled happily into Walter's worried face. "Fear nothing. I do this for my friend, the noble Lancelot of Camelot."

"You'll be hamburger when this is over!"

Galahad, settling his visor into place, threw Amesvent a very serious look suddenly. Quietly he asked: "God's trousers, sire, hast thou no faith in my arm?"

"Don't do it!"

"Sire—" the small man cut him off. "Sire—jousting is my career. Odds bodkins! I am a Knight of the Table Round—a sword-arm of my leal liege, Arthur the King! Doubtest thou me,

then?"

Amesvent stepped back. A weird look chased across his face.

"Why—why you're *glad* about this!"

The little man threw back his plumed head. "Aye, sire. I lend my lance to defend the honor of a fellow-knight, Sir Lancelot of Camelot!"

Before Amesvent could recover, the little guy had pushed past, slid over the ropes, seized the bridle of the patient charger which had been the Black Knight's. With a whisk, he bounded into the saddle. From a gawking attendant, he took a pair of gauntlets, slipped them over his lady-sized hands and then couched the wooden lance in its place near the saddle.

By Jiminy Jeepers, all of a sudden he straightened up on that horse—and the crowd stopped buzzing and gave him a great big hand! He looked like he fitted there on the broad back of the big nag, with his soiled plume streaming in the breeze, his head erect inside his battered helmet, his lance at the rest position, his slim feet crowding down solidly into the stirrups, and his shield held lightly before the worn old iron breastplate.

I let out a low whistle. That Galahad *was* a real knight!

A fanfare of trumpets. The two warriors—the slim, quiet, easy-riding little Galahad and the big, ranting, beefy Greaseball, out for blood—reined in their mounts on opposite sides of the roped off space. For a suspenseful second the two horses pawed the earth, facing one another. Then Galahad saluted gracefully with his wooden stick, lowered it to the ready. Greaseball Tommy spat on his big paws and shook his fist at his small opponent.

The M.C. motioned the trumpeters to get set for the battle signal. He turned on his mike, then stooped to ask Amesvent something.

"The little one's name?" echoed Amesvent. "Why—"

"Galahad, if it please thee!" cried out that gent himself, loudly.

The M.C. looked wise, winking at Walter.

"Er, that's right," Amesvent chimed in. "It really is Galahad. Ah, er, Galahad McCoy—of Yonkers!"

AND thus the announcement was made. A royal joust between Sir Lancelot of Camelot Crispies, and Sir Galahad McCoy of Yonkers!

Again the trumpets sounded. And the battle was on!

I'll never forget it. Never! With ponderous slowness the big nags got under way and thundered together at the center of the arena. The Greaseball lunged first, having the edge on arm-length.

With effortless ease, while the crowd "ah-ed" in amazed appreciation at his skill, Galahad parried the clumsy, violent thrust with his tin shield. The racket of the blow sounded like milk cans in an alley, but Galahad got off with only a dented buckler—and the wooden spear scraped harmlessly to one side as the real knight diverted it.

All this happened in a trice. In less than two forward steps of the horses. Then the combatants entered a shorter range—one which fitted Galahad's arms. His own wooden lance slid out like a striking snake. It popped the cursing Greaseball dead in the center of his tinny breastplate. With a jolt like he had tried to buck an oncoming locomotive, Greaseball Tommy stiffened in his saddle as his foe's lance caught its target.

"Caitiff knight!" cried Galahad, joyously, as he smote.

"UGH!" wheezed the Greaseball as the blow collapsed his lungs.

But though he reeled in his saddle,

he did not fall. And the horses trotted slowly past and turned for the second encounter.

Again they lumbered together in the arena-center. Again the Greaseball struck first. Again his lance skittered foolishly off at an angle as Galahad coolly blocked his lunge. Once more then, Galahad—shunting his opponent's thrust with upraised left arm—leaned his body forward and slightly to the right. With all his slim but sturdy weight behind it, Galahad's wooden lance popped home again—smack-dab in the very same dent his initial thrust had made!

As he smote, he cried this time: "For the *true* Lancelot!"

There was the momentary clang of a sledge hammer on boilerplate, while splinters of wood filled the air between the two jousters.

Greaseball Tommy's shield clattered to the ground along with his stick. The two horses moved slowly past—like battleships at half-speed maneuvers.

Galahad, flinging away the stub of a broken stick, all that remained of his toy lance, yanked hard to pivot his mount and face his enemy a third time. But the Greaseball's horse stolidly thumped straight ahead and only stopped at the ropes. When it did halt, the giant body of the Greaseball, stiff as a board, slowly wavered, bent backward, toppled over the white charger's broad rump and thudded groundward like a crashing skyscraper.

When the big body hit it bounced. The Greaseball's helmet went rolling off. His eyes, glazed like cellophane-wrapped eggs, stuck out white in his red face. He groaned once—loud, bull-like. With great finality.

Galahad, seeing his enemy upon the ground, whipped a sword from its scabbard and leapt from his own mount. He hovered above the fallen

giant, waiting for him to rise.

"Enough, so soon, varlet?" he asked in a voice that was not the least bit ruffled.

When the Greaseball did not answer, Sir Galahad set his foot on the unhorsed knight's thick neck and held high his sword.

"Lancelot—this buffoon makes mock of thee no longer!"

THE crowd—silent during the battle as if realizing somehow that not even a Grover Whalen could have cooked up a spectacle like this in advance—now let loose a howl that rattled the rafters of the cereal pavilion like a cyclone.

"The guy done it! The little guy's kayoed him! Hurrah for Galahad McCoy of Yonkers!"

This time, not two but four attendants eased under the ropes. Laboring, they hauled off the vanquished warrior by his ignominious heels. I read in next day's papers where he was out over half an hour in the showers. Galahad had put Greaseball Tommy out like a light.

I was still staring, bug-eyed, watching the Greaseball's feet-first exit from the arena, when I heard Walter buzzing in my ears.

"Come, Hank! Get out of here before those reporters reach us through the mob. We can't *explain* this thing, you know!"

He jostled me toward the nearest exit. I saw Eunice sprinting ahead of us. She had Sir Galahad by one hand, pulling him along at a dog-trot. Still casual, the little guy carried his helmet on his arm, and had not bothered to remove his glinting breastplate.

NO one spoke till we had parked ourselves in a city-bound train.

Then, "Whew," whewed Amesvent.

grinning a grin that ran clear around his skull. "Sir Galahad—you were splendid! Simply splendid!"

Galahad beamed. Eunice patted him on the arm.

"We'll get you back to the Y.M.C.A.," Amesvent rambled comfortably, "snake you back into your armor, and have you in the Time Swing by midnight. And you'll be back in Camelot with many a tale to tell the King and your friends, before you realize it. . . ."

"Return to Camelot, warlock? By the spell which brought me here? Zounds, I rue that parting hour!"

"That goes double," agreed Amesvent. He took the lady-size hand of the knight in his own and shook it heartily. "A million thanks, old man. You pulled us out of a tough spot—and don't think I'll ever forget it."

"I'll never forget you either," sang Eunice—and kissed Sir Galahad on the cheek.

"Odds bodkins! Bless my buckler!" Sir Galahad was blushing!

An idea hit me about now. "Hey—how come we all got on this train? Who's paying?"

Amesvent looked wiser than a kibitzer at bridge. His long bony forefinger stuck me in the chest. He winked.

Galahad interrupted. He pulled something from his pocket and waved it aloft. "Behold my prize! I take this back to Camelot!" he declaimed. "My treasure from the Yankee Court of Mighty Merlin!"

In his paw was that nickel-plated loving cup the M.C. had offered to the triumphant knight in the arena! Letters gleamed on its base. "*Souvenir of the World of Tomorrow*," it read. "*Compliments of Grover Whalen*."

"For Pete's ache!" That was me. "Where'd that come from?"

Galahad glowed. "I took it from that

caitiff knight I felled. In the tent of enchantment where I jousted." He polished it on the sleeve of his baggy coat. "It may not be the Grail I sought," he explained, "but 'twill serve as a symbol in the Court of Camelot until my real quest is over."

**A** SUBSTITUTE Grail—symbol of knighthood's quest! Brought back as a memento from the World of Tomorrow by the knight errant from Yesterday, to amaze and astound the Court of King Arthur of Camelot!

"It'll help when you tell 'em about the big one that got away," I cracked, and added to Amesvent: "Too bad we didn't get him some other souvenirs."

Sir Galahad smiled again and fished into a roomy pocket of his borrowed suit. "Forsooth, wait until my good liege Arthur beholds *this* magical charm!

And he held up one of those color-photo brochures that show all the buildings in the Fair! I can see those knights squatted around their Round Table now—listening while Galahad dangles his brochure before their dazzled eyes, and tells them all about Jungles, Gay New Orleans, the Winter Wonderland, and the Perisphere!

But back there on the train, I had another matter on my mind. "Walter—where did that dough come from that paid our fare?" I insisted.

Walter Amesvent's chest ex-

panded. He patted himself proudly. "A simple matter of faith, me lad," he elucidated. "When I saw our pal, Galahad, here, was so anxious to fight that joust, I realized what he told me was the truth—fighting is his business."

"And so?"

"And so I made book on the fight! I cleaned up over a hundred and twenty bucks from yokels who thought a second-rate pug could unhorse a gallant knight of Arthur's realm on the field of honor, just because he was bigger!"

"Galahad the dragon-slayer," Eunice smiled softly, giving his arm a little squeeze.

"Galahad the rent-payer," corrected Amesvent, flourishing a fat roll of beautiful green paper.

"You mean," I topped them, "Sir Galahad of Camelot—rescuer of maidens in distress! Another notch for his sword-handle, says I!"

Sir Galahad merely threw Walter and me a little grin, and turned his charm on the lovely aquabelle, Eunice.

"I bend the knee to thee, maiden," he syruiped. "Summon me from the

mists of time and the leagues of space whenever thou wilt. My sword-arm champions thee for now and evermore!"

Then Eunice undid her hair-ribbon and gave it to him to wear back home in Camelot. A favour from his lady faire.

What a hand with the gals that Sir Galahad was!

Take it from me, the lad deserved the reputation he had.



"There's a man out here who says he has the secret of invisibility practically licked."

# BIG MAN



In maddened fury, the pilot drove his plane straight toward Big Man's face guns spitting

BY ROSS ROCKLYNNE



**What was the grim purpose of this colossal figure that stalked steadily toward Washington?**

ON that night of June, 1978, A.D., across the miles of quiet water, from island to island, from coastal steamer to pleasure yacht, from ship to island to radio stations on the Florida mainland, flashed mad, coded messages:

"I saw it, I tell you. It was a man. I saw it with my own eyes. He came right out of the horizon. He filled the whole horizon and threw a big shadow down onto the water. I couldn't see the Moon. . . . For God's sake, tell me, did you see him?"

From a coast guard station on the Floridan coast:

"Are you crazy? If this is a gag! Listen—"

"But I *saw* it!" Wildly. "I *think* I saw it. . . . Maybe I didn't. My head aches. Wait till tomorrow. Maybe I'm sick. I *must* be sick."

But verifications skittered madly across that stretch of quiet sea. People had seen a man, a *big* man, coming up out of the sea!

"Did you see it, WX31D?"

"Did I! Thank God *you* saw it! If you hadn't—I don't know what . . ."

The sun came up, bathing the world in the hideous light of reality it must

face. And the mad messages skittered across the world and the sea.

There was a man striding through the ocean, through the quiet Atlantic.

On the Floridan coast, people who hoped they weren't mad saw that man, saw him swelling out of the smallness perspective gave him, saw him rising out of the sea like a monster of olden fable.

Great arms he had, with immense, mountainous biceps, and shoulders that were the acme in human strength; a face which but for its size might have been that of an ordinary man; a long, evenly designed nose that swept for hundreds of feet down between the chasms of the cheeks; eyes as fiery as twin suns; lips as thick around as the body of a python; flat chest bounded by easily flowing pectorals; mile-long legs the muscles of which made valleys of shadow with each motion.

That was Big Man, as first he came to the eyes of humanity.

**A**LL sorts of wild, lunatic messages went skittering across the nation, touching at last the ears of the president.

He smiled. What strange babies his people were that yet they believed in fairy tales!

"You say this man is coming in from the open sea. And you say he must be more than a mile, perhaps *two* miles high! Certainly you can see the absurdity of it? That such a thing cannot be? Very well—it is no more than a mirage!"

But no! Could a mirage sweep the clouds from its path?

But the president continued to smile. "Very well, then. We shall dispatch an order—a few planes—"

Planes came flitting up from the dull land surface, went swarming and buzzing like a horde of mosquitoes toward

the Big Man who, that sunny afternoon of 1978 A.D., came striding through the sea toward the nether tip of Florida. They hesitated a mile distant; circled in violent alarm; went on again, flying into the Sun, came within staring distance of those acre-big, fiery eyes. They broke formation, went back toward land as fast as mechanical limitations would let them.

"He's real!"

A nation, a world, went collectively mad.

**B**IG MAN plowed through the water of the outflowing Gulf Stream, veered around the tip of Florida, into the Gulf, and straight northwest, until, after two leisurely days, he stood out from the Mississippi Delta.

There he stood for half a day. And now people saw, as they stared in fascination, that the monster, this Colossus, was nothing less than human. For the winds high up there caught at his black hair, and streamed it out, and his body threw a long shadow onto the water.

It had been a man that strode those waters during the day and, as the sun went down, through the star-sprinkled night; it had been a man that set foot into the oozing muck of a lightless seabottom. A monolith of human flesh, a Titan of extra-titanic dimensions, almost an Atlas who held the world on his shoulders.

Newsreel planes began to zip out from the land, to shoot around the head of the monster with nerveless courage—until he raised a hand and brushed them away like disquieting flies.

And they fled, but knew then that it was a man, only a big man, and not a god. There was no wisdom in the eyes; indeed, in their blue, gleaming depths there was the look of a child

which is proud of its strength and size.

Of clothing he had none, if one might discount the collar. A collar! A frame work of metal that might easily have landed several planes, and closer to the neck a metal enclosure with doors and windows. And attached to lips and ears, at times, metallic objects which might have been, respectively—a transmitter?—a receiver?

Toward land Big Man went. Freighters and pleasure craft which had, with the greatest of courage, steamed around and between the unbending pillars of his legs, plowed desperately away. It was a wild sea they had to battle.

Carefully Big Man picked his way, taking great care to harm no living thing or structure. Up the Mississippi he went. His feet were huge things, half a thousand feet broad, but he carefully planted them in mid-channel. He went slowly. Too great a speed would have caused giant waves to overlap the levees. Even then, the river became unruly. A flooded bayou drowned a town. A giant foot caught unwittingly in the structure of a bridge that spanned the turbid stream.

Up the Mississippi went Big Man, a moving Colossus, that finally stopped at the mouth of the Ohio and threw a shadow a solid ten miles up the river. Cairo was quiet.

A thunder voice spoke, took control of the radio waves, ousted them out of the ether, substituted itself, blatted from every radio of the land, and of some parts of the world.

Big Man spoke! And the president, who had laughed, stood shortly before a microphone, wetting his lips.

"It is Big Man who speaks?" he whispered.

"Yes," said the Voice.

"WELL, then, I am the president, whom you asked for. I am glad

you have spoken. There are so many things we must know. Who are you? From whence do you come? Are you human? I believe you are human, Big Man, for though you swelled the waters of a bayou and drowned a town, and wrecked a bridge at New Orleans, I know you have been careful. For that I thank you properly. Now tell me who you are and why?"

The Voice that came floating down out of the clouds was deep, even, slowly paced.

"Your questions are natural. Yet, hereafter, you will desist from asking them. Know only that I am—Big Man!

"Yes, I have been considerate. I realize that henceforth rivers can be my only road. I will continue to be considerate if you so wish it. If there have been any human lives lost, then I am sorry, but every sweeping change in the history of the world occasions that."

The Voice became solemnly insistent.

"Yes, this is revolution. But, if you so wish it, it shall contain no deliberate bloodshed. I created myself for but one purpose. Not to reap personal glory, or to glorify myself with an unexampled amount of power, but to better the world that lies at my feet.

"Listen to me, Mr. President. I am huge. I am powerful. I am equipped mentally to solve every problem that puzzles a long-weary, long-unhappy world.

"Henceforth, I am the master of human destinies in America."

The president laughed, a tired, old sound.

"You are the master of human destinies," he said, as if wishing to share in some joke. Then, querulously: "But you are *not* the master of America. I am the president. You must under-

stand."

"It is you who does not understand!" Sharply. "Mr. President. Are you not sad because the world suffers so? And is it not evident to you that the world has all the possibilities of a Garden of Eden?"

"All the possibilities of a Garden of Eden," echoed the president feebly.

"Well, then, and why is it not so?"

"It is the way people are made, Big Man. The human race simply has not had enough time to reach Utopia. It must come gradually."

Impatience crept into the god-like tones.

"Bah! Are you going to dawdle, and let the golden age of the human race slip by? I am going to remake your pitiful world! Why haven't you taken advantage of its liberal resources? Man, above all things, must learn contentment. You, and a hundred others like you, will continue to mismanage the opportunities that eagerly await you. And I have come to take over those duties."

**A** BILLION people, in all parts of the world, were listening. It was one lone, bewildered man, who had to make answer.

He said, "It is impossible."

"Then," came the cold, godly tones, "there will be bloodshed."

"Bloodshed is not necessary," came the president's tense whisper. "Go back into the sea whence you came. Depart at once, I implore you! You are not aware of the impertinence of your request. I think you are a fool even to think we would accede. There are no dictatorships in the Americas. We are democracies. It is mass rule. It is the people who decide everything. One man is fallible. He makes mistakes that lead to great unhappiness. . . . I implore you."

A silence grew that shrieked across the world, and a rage grew with the silence.

"To think that an imbecile should rule a nation," whispered the Voice from the clouds. "There will be bloodshed, then."

Still feebly, still hopelessly, came the president's tenuous voice. "I am sorry, Big Man. I am truly sorry. There will be bloodshed, but—it will be your blood. Big Man—we must kill you."

And the answer to that came back, icily scornful. "I am coming to Washington, Mr. President, and it is *you* who shall die, along with your city!"

**M**OVING with an ease and slowness that bespoke contempt, the monster thereupon moved up the Ohio River. Still he was careful, still considerate. The sun behind him, and a dozen sprawling towns at his feet, he forged toward Washington, a juggernaut of potential destruction.

Past Louisville, past Cincinnati, its streets and buildings and river front thronged with hushed people, staring affrightedly at the Colossus whose head was lost out of sight two miles up into the clouded sky.

Past Wheeling, and Pittsburgh; and down the Potomac.

Big Man was going to Washington, threat in every lineament of his insanely impossible bulk.

**I**N Washington, atop a private residence on Pennsylvania Avenue, a man and a girl stood with a good, strong wind lashing at their faces.

The man was clad in the uniform of the Army Air Corps, the silver strap of a Lieutenant Colonel on his shoulder. He was big. He had coal black hair. In one of his large, tanned hands he held the small, white hand of the girl, who was shivering under her light, sum-

mer dress.

She whispered, her dark eyes wide, "It seems impossible. A man that big—"

She broke off, her breath catching in her throat, as her eyes centered again on the magnificent torso of Big Man, who, moving with leisureliness of contempt, was descending on Washington.

Jason Smith's face was white. His thoughts fled back ten years. Again he heard that cold voice, speaking words that had burned themselves into his brain.

*"Someday, Jason, I'll rule the world! What is money? I want power!"*

"I think everybody ought to evacuate Washington," Sandra DuBois continued with a shudder. "Why does the president insist on staying? All that monster has to do is put a foot on top of the capitol, and the hope of the nation is gone. . . . What are you thinking of, Jason? Why aren't you listening?"

He started, whirled on her fiercely.

"How can I listen? I've got thoughts that stop up my ears! For ten years I've kept a promise, and because I kept it, Big Man is out there now!"

"What in the world are you talking about?" the girl whispered, drawing herself in sudden compassion toward him.

"I'm talking about Big Man!"

He took her hands, led her across the roof to two chairs. They sat down.

"Sandra—I know who it was that talked down out of the clouds to the president. Once he was my best friend, and he showed me things, and told me things, that he made me promise never to reveal.

"That isn't Big Man who is talking," he went on in a tense whisper, the girl watching him with alarmed eyes. "Big Man has the eyes of a

child. He is proud that he is big. I'll bet he hasn't an atom of malice in his whole body. It's the man behind Big Man! Clive Martin! He who sits up there in that 'collar' around Big Man's neck.

"Clive Martin is an ordinary man, made of the same stuff as you and I. But he's a scientific genius, has a humanitarian instinct tinged with a lust for power."

He stole a look at the Colossus.

"How could a man grow to that size? Not naturally, certainly. Clive Martin did that! I saw Big Man when he was of normal size, when he was no more than eighteen years of age. Clive took that youth, took his whole life, made him into that! Glands!

"I've seen guinea pigs of Clive's that grew to heights of twenty-five and thirty feet. Rabbits too. And he had a dog, a St. Bernard, which, although it loved him and whimpered when he came near—its whimpers were like thunder because its voice-box was so large—he finally killed it. He was afraid it might jump the seventy-foot paliade it was enclosed in.

"But he let the boy grow. He worked with a pituitary-extract—tethelin. If you inject it into mice it doubles their growth. He worked at it—most of his life. He told me the pineal body and the pituitary gland were the master glands. That was his ambition. He was going to control those master glands, and through them make giants, giants whose glands would keep on working, past the limit of growth, in complete harmony. Yes! What if the glands could be kept working overtime, harmoniously, indefinitely? Wouldn't the end product be that man over there, striding down the Potomac?"

"WHAT about the boy?" she asked.

"He was the victim of an ex-

treme case of aphasia. He couldn't speak a word, had no memory, was a baby in mentality. He went ahead, let the boy grow, giving him injections. And I've known it ten years," he said hollowly. "I knew that some day Big Man would come."

He arose, pulled her to her feet.

"And now," he smiled bitterly, "I've got my orders to fly against it. At noon."

"But they were going to kill it!"

"Not now. The President knows there's power behind Big Man—and he knows that power, that other man, lives in the collar around Big Man's neck. That's the objective he gave us. We're supposed to occupy the collar."

He shuddered.

"Fine! A squadron of planes trying to get through arms three quarters of a mile long!"

As hundreds of thousands of others were doing, they watched Big Man, the sun shining on his bronzed body, flashing in shadows and ripples of light across the square mile of foot-thick epidermis. A cloud swirled behind him, enveloped his waist. His arms swung in easy motion as he picked his way down the Potomac.

"I might not come back," Jason said. He put strong arms around the girl, trying to still her trembling. He kissed her once, tenderly, and then put her away from him. He left the roof.

She watched him go. She walked back across the roof. She became fascinated at the monster's slow approach. Soon his whole body would be visible, and soon, also, she would see the suicide squadron go zooming up there, to die when the monstrosity began to thresh with its arms.

The sun was rising higher, toward noon. It was hot and white in the sky. To the left the Washington Monument might have been a straight, shiny

sword raised in protest against the destruction of the city. Once in awhile the sun caught in the acre-big eyes of the giant and they became suns themselves, with a tinge of blueness to the blinding silver. Sometimes teeth flashed like polished metal. That hapless youth, so proud of his bigness, of the eyes of the world turned upon him. And soon he would murder Jason Smith . . .

She watched in incurable fascination. Big Man approached, knees now visible in the distance. How perfect he looked. If the rolling greenery of the land about, and the placid whiteness of Washington had not caught in the corners of the eyes, Big Man might just have been a normal human being. But there was perspective, miles of it—and Big Man was huge!

In one more moment, the sun was flashing from Big Man's shins. There was a scar on one of them . . .

Something was drumming in her brain. Some memory that struggled for recognition. Years . . . her soul seemed reaching out, as if she were yearning herself to Big Man. Dimly she groped, in frenzied awe. That scar. . . .

She began to sob. She ran from the roof. Onto the stairs, down into the street. She caught a cruising cab. The cab broke all speed laws—they had been forgotten anyway—getting to the airport.

IT was eleven when she got there. Jason Smith, so soon to fly against the monster, was now thinking his last thoughts, for soon he would look with certain eyes on death. But she, with a folly that was more strategic than even she could have guessed, was going to fly against Big Man before ever the army planes throbbed up into the sky.

Her single-seater slanted upward,

executed a wing bank, and darted off like a startled bird. Someone, at the last moment, had tried to stop her. All planes had been ordered out of the air. A sizable bribe had brought hers out. Now they couldn't stop her. They *wouldn't* stop her!

With the sun astern, she set the controls into a gradual climb. Face white, lips set with a horror she could scarcely analyse, she grasped the stick, setting her course for Big Man's head.

It was not a fast plane. It was more a toy. By the time she reached Big Man, Jason Smith, flight commander of his squadron, would be within short miles of his objective with the smile of death in his eye. But she would get there first.

She pursued a long circle that would bring her up behind the Titan. Where would the eyes of that damnable Clive Martin, that fiend who had taken the life of a young boy, rest? Ahead? Yes, certainly. Therefore she would land from behind!

From afar she saw him. His legs had diminished with downward distance like railroad tracks converging. His head had grown like a baseball expanding. His arms swung with an evenness of motion that was pendulous. And now, with the sun astern, she throbbed with unswerving purpose toward the broad, bronzed back.

He filled the whole sky. The world beneath was spread out in squares of light and dark brown. Her plane struck an air bump, and another, an air valley. For a moment, she leafed down, scared to the bone. She brought the ship out.

So swiftly did the monster move he created a veritable windstorm in his wake.

Battling the fury of the wind with the sun shut out by the bulk of the Colossus, she drove for the collar. So

intent was she on her purpose that the staccato puttering of words from the headphones paralysed her. The ship spun downward again, but dragging back her nerve she said tensely,

"I'm landing."

"You are not!" came back an incisive, commanding voice. "Stand away, or by Heaven I'll smash your ship!"

She bit her lip angrily. She wouldn't be balked.

"I'm landing," she repeated grimly. The collar came closer. The monster abruptly ceased motion, began to turn toward her. If one of those arms . . .

She cried breathlessly, "Listen to me! You can't murder me—Clive Martin!"

And in the moment of paralysed silence that followed she had banked the ship upward, come zooming in toward the collar. She landed on one wheel. The ship skewed around, dizzily. The nape of a tremendous neck, all shaggy with hair, was the last thing she remembered. There was a crash, a torturing scream from splintered struts.

SHE was lying on a bed when she awoke. She lay motionless. Remembrance flooded her. She kept her eyes closed. She remembered again the crash. She realized where she must be. She tensed her muscles. Now, if anything, she must be calm.

"Discontinue, please, your silly pretense," said a cold voice.

She started violently, and then lay still again, clenching her fists, the sweat breaking out coldly on her brow. She finally opened her eyes, sat up with one swift movement, with one hand dashed back a mass of auburn hair from her eyes.

Clive Martin sat there, at ease. She first saw his utterly white hair, and

then the burning black of his eyes leaped out and seared her. How young the face, how old the eyes! Old with a flame of wisdom that transcended the petty malice of humanity. But at first glance, she knew she would hate him, would hate him forever. For he himself was a monster more monstrous than the Herculean youth whose shoulders he rode.

This was a tiny room. She saw a bed, chairs, a tiny window that overlooked the circular platform below.

Clive Martin's eyes met hers coldly. She recoiled inwardly. He waved a brown hand, young, sinuous, suggestive of the muscular flexibility of a viper.

"Don't be afraid," he murmured. The light in his eyes became more intense as he leaned forward. "You knew Jason Smith," he whispered.

She stilled quivering nerves.

"Yes," she answered defiantly. "He told me who you were, what you've done—"

"What have I done?" he queried softly.

"What have you done? Why, you've ruined the life of a boy who could have lived the life God intended him to live. You've taken away all the joys and ecstasies of a normal existence. You've—"

The white-haired terror said softly, "Big Man is happy. He doesn't know anything else. He's been too occupied with his own growth. No. I wouldn't say"—and he smiled—"that Big Man would want to be normal. He pities normal people!

"You see," he waved a slow, languid hand, "he was nothing when I discovered him running, naked, up the country road that led to my estate in West Virginia. He merely lived. He couldn't talk, didn't know how to eat. He was as good as dead. But I saved him. I taught him to speak. I taught him to

revel in his bigness, to be proud of his growth. He is a child yet. I am his master, whom he loves."

"But he was a man," she whispered tensely. "You, with your scientific genius, made him into a monster, the slave of your desire, pulled by the strings of your mentality." She sprang to her feet, trembling with rage. "And somewhere Big Man had a mother, a father, a sister. Did you care—"

She stopped, her heart contracting. Out of the distance came a droning, a throbbing, an insistently approaching mutter.

Clive Martin's terrible eyes smiled. "Before I instruct Big Man to deal with the approaching armada, suppose you tell me why you are so unnaturally vehement? Does the menace you think Big Man presents to the world call for such valorous action on your part?"

Her answer came of itself, almost absently. She was thinking of Jason Smith, again, as he came on with the death-smile on his lips.

"I saw Big Man, standing in the sun," she whispered. "I saw a scar flash like a mirror on his shin. There was never but one scar like that in the world. I was sixteen. I dressed the wound that turned into that scar. An eighteen year old boy. He shinnied up a tree, shinnied down. A square scar, with a steeple on it.

"Big Man," she whispered, her eyes coming back to his, her voice breaking, "was my brother."

THE drone thundered at them. Girl and man stared at each other, almost without emotion, save that the eyes of the white-haired terror became blacker. His lips said something soundless, and then he turned to the radio room seen through the door.

His back was to Sandra DuBois. Like a tigress abruptly brought back

to rage and courage, she leaped onto him from behind, long strong arms about his neck, and dragged him backward. He fell, shouting insensately. She jumped to her feet, intent only on one thing, to murder him, to step on his face with the sharp heel of her shoe, to squeeze his eyes back into his brain.

He reached up from his position, grasped her foot in two muscular hands, and with an unbelievable ferocity literally flung her across the room. She hit the wall, subsided into a heap that sobbed and groaned.

In the radio room, Clive Martin spoke through a peculiarly constructed radio that was adapted to Big Man's abnormal voice and hearing.

"Yes, master."

The intonations were those of a slave which awaits its master's bidding.

"You can see the planes coming in from the distance? I am afraid we will have to destroy them, Big Man."

The monster hesitated in speech so long that Clive Martin said sharply.

"You will have to overcome your dislike of the destruction of human lives! For if you do not kill them, they will hurt or possibly kill you!"

The monster seemed to sigh. He said.

"Yes, master."

Clive Martin quietly left the radio room, emerged on the platform built around Big Man's neck. He stood there quietly, listening to the drone that grew in his ears until it became a menacing roar, until the squadron hove into sight from the far distance.

With a little smile curving his lips, he watched the slaughter that followed.

The squadron came from the rear, in full flight formation. Big Man paused in his stride toward Washington. Now, in one swift movement, he pivoted, faced the oncoming combat planes.

An arm, perfectly proportioned, swished upward and out, dashed against the foremost plane, crumpled it into nothingness. The formation broke. The hideous clamor of laboring engines broke the even, monotonous drone that had pervaded the depthless upward sky 11,000 feet above solid ground. The arm again made a single motion, flung half a dozen planes against each other, crumpled them. They burst into flame, leafed earthward, trailing smoke streams.

The planes dipped and dived, trying in panic to escape the swooping deadliness of those arms. None did—except two.

In one of these was a man who suddenly went mad from the wholesale slaughter of his comrades.

In the other was Jason Smith. Thrice he eluded death by slipping with an uncanny accuracy through the very fingers of the giant. That could not last long. Other planes were being crushed like tissue paper around him.

But somehow he, and the man who had gone mad, lived through the horror of the flailing arms.

**J**ASON SMITH drove determinedly for the collar. The other pilot madly catapulted his plane toward that huge, kindly, boyish face, revenge in his heart. He had forgotten his orders.

Yet, in the next moment, with the head of the giant less than a quarter mile distant, each would have been doomed. Jason Smith froze in horror. What was that long white column of flesh coming so ferociously toward him? No time to swerve, to escape—he watched in fascination. Long human arm—five fingers, palm with lines in it. A hand! It was going to slap him!

Clive Martin watched, as the planes escaped death. He entered his radio

room with swift, irate strides, started to speak to Big Man.

He never spoke. Something heavy descended on his head. Without a sound, he subsided into a heap on the floor. Sandra DuBois, whimpering with horror, shouted then to Big Man, through the transmitter.

"Big Man! Don't touch those planes!"

And Big Man, lover of humanity that he was, and already blood-sickened, obeyed, though he knew it was not the master who spoke, but a softer-voiced being. In another five seconds, Jason Smith and the madman would have met death. Instead, the hand simply shot by with express train velocity.

The resultant suction caught the planes, drew them hundreds of feet upward. Jason Smith fought his plane, brought it out of danger, cut his speed, and made a perfect three-point on the collar.

The madman made no attempt to land. Snarling, he gunned his ship forward, until he was glaring into the kind eyes of the Colossus with his own hate-filled ones. He let loose a blast of machine-gun fire that swept across and again across the acre-big blueness of those eyes. He then lost control, and glanced against the monster's forehead. A wing snapped from his plane. Looping and twisting, he fell Earthward to his death. But he had succeeded. He had blinded Big Man.

**F**OR one horrible moment of unbelief, Big Man stood still. He had been hurt, hurt for the first time in his memory. He raised one hand falteringly, pawed at his eyes. Pain stabbed through his brain. He screamed, a sound nobody could have heard, since his larynx was so big. He started to sway, pawing at his eyes, emitting the

soundless screams constantly.

Two miles below, his feet, so considerably placed in the middle of the Potomac, began to dance grotesquely, raising waves. One foot lifted, paused aimlessly above the water, and then came down on shore in the middle of a river town. The other foot dragged itself out of the water with a sucking sound, dragged through the town destroying seven frame houses and many inhabitants thereof.

Then the feet were gone. Big Man went staggering away into open country. He had never before traveled on dry land. Always he had been restricted to the sea, near the island where his master, by a strange science, had nurtured him from a six foot boy to a two mile giant. But now he ran at a velocity that was close to seven hundred miles an hour. He emitted from his mouth great screams of animal pain.

At the most, he was unaware of his actions, unaware that he was the cause of untold destruction. He was only aware of an unendurable pain, and he could not understand the darkness. He fled eastward across the state of Maryland, bounding rivers and streams, never knowing they were there. He planted one foot in Hyattsville, demolishing three houses and a bank and killing eleven people. He continued on, turning now slightly north, staggering like an animal in its death throes.

He pawed at his eyes, his hands coming away sticky. Great rivulets of blood were seeping from the fleshy bridge of his nose, and his eyes, where his eyes used to be, were red horrors. He unwittingly followed a highway that led through Patapsco, to its partial ruin. He went on to Baltimore, which he missed by a scant twenty miles. He was now heading due north. His mouth hung open slackly. He was sobbing,

groaning, breathing hard. Blood began to drip down on the collar.

He missed both Glyndon and Grive. But he swathed a wide streak out of Carrollton. He crossed the state border into Pennsylvania. Here he stumbled in Piney's Creek, and fell, leveling a whole forest. When he rose to his feet, he had bloody scratches on his chest.

IT was while Big Man was going east across Maryland, before his fall, that Clive Martin recovered consciousness. Jason Smith and Sandra DuBois were standing above him, their faces white and sickened from the fact of Big Man's blindness.

The hand of the wounded man rose, plucked at the bandages which Sandra had wrapped around his head after washing the wound from a tank of distilled water. She drew the hand away, almost roughly.

The white-haired man opened his eyes, and centered them on the girl. He lay still.

"What happened?" he asked quietly.

"I hit you," she said calmly. "Jason Smith was in one of those planes. I told my brother to let them alone."

"Yes?" There was an edge of steel in his eyes, but still he was motionless. "After that, what happened? Why are we rising and falling so much?" Suddenly he jumped to his feet, faced the two of them savagely. "What happened to Big Man after you told him to let those two planes alone?"

Tears came unashamedly from her eyes. "The other man blinded him."

Clive Martin's whole face turned haggard and old in a moment.

"Ah-h," he whispered torturously, and like a drunken man, he staggered from the room. They heard him shouting Big Man's name into the transmitter. But Big Man did not answer.

Finally he came out again.

"I couldn't get in touch with him," he whispered brokenly. "He's blind. He doesn't know what he's doing. God knows what destruction—" He buried his face in his hands.

Clouds were beginning to gather around them. The sun was setting in the west. Big Man was plunging north, a Colossus bathed in golden light, a monster god taken leave of his senses. Clive Martin raised his head, and for the first time, apparently, noticed the presence of Jason Smith.

"It's been ten years," Jason said emotionlessly.

"Eh? . . . Yes. Ten years. The dream was beginning then." His hands moved vaguely. "How easily it was dissolved!"

Jason's lips twisted. "We used to be good friends, Clive. But now I have to put you under arrest."

He stopped, tense.

Suddenly there had been motion, irregular motion, a sense of swift, appalling descent. Jason leaped to a window. The whole world was crazily tilting. The horizons were slowly slanting to an increasing angle. Afar, Chesapeake Bay looked as if soon it would spill over onto the land.

Jason whirled. He snapped, "Big Man has stumbled. He's falling. We have to get out."

He grasped Big Man's pallid, apathetic creator by the arm.

"You've got a plane? Double seater? . . . Take Sandra, then!"

The three of them ran out onto the platform around the monster's neck, Jason with one arm wrapped about the girl. The white-haired man quickly flung open a pair of large double doors. Within the compartment revealed was a monoplane, double seater, wings curved back into the fuselage.

Jason, leaning against a wind that screamed up at them, practically threw

the girl into the cockpit. Clive Martin, already at the controls, gunned the motor. The plane leaped out, the wings snapping into place. The wind became a shrieking whirl. The plane was whirled away from the platform by a wind that was born of the high altitudes and the speed of the monster's descent.

Jason Smith barely made his own plane. It leafed away, dangerously. Big Man's stumbling body swooped past, a blur of arms and torso and streaming black hair. The suction drew the two planes down with him, and for thousands of perilous feet they fell, the props failing to spin, not taking hold until the planes turned into the wind. The planes climbed, with a scream from tortured struts.

**S**ANDRA, white-faced, saw her brother fall. A voluminous cloud of dust rose, obscured for a time the fallen giant. Then he moved, blindly groped to his feet, and staggered south, a whimpering look on his face.

Big Man continued moving at enormous velocities. By the time the two planes reached Frederick, Maryland, he could not be seen at all.

The planes landed in a meadow outside Frederick. For two solid hours thereafter, Clive Martin, with the eyes of Jason Smith constantly on him, sat before a radio and whispered Big Man's name. But he received no answer.

He finally ceased. He met Jason's eyes, bitterly.

"Why don't you take me in?" he questioned, smiling ironically.

"I'm hoping you can stop Big Man, Clive. If anyone can, you can."

His shoulders drooped.

"I'm a little sorry for you, Clive," he said quietly. "Ten years ago, you were pretty enthusiastic about this Big

Man you were going to create. Now it's come to this—your dream is shot. On account of a woman at that. If only you'd have tried to help the world in ways it could understand! How did Big Man eat—there isn't enough food in the world to feed him, certainly."

"Food from rock—transmutation, concentration," said Clive Martin. He bit at his lip, his eyes down.

"Yes," he said slowly, "I could have given that to the world—and a few other things, I guess. But it was all subsidiary to my real purpose. I was using all my money on food, money I needed for expenses, to pay my men, to pay for equipment and its transportation to the island. I was too busy for—" He shook his head. He reached out a hand, turned on the radio.

The announcer's voice blared out readily:

"... blind. What an end for this monster of the skies, this incredible Titan who for five brief days held the nation in a reign of terror. Now that is over. Big Man, with a speed—velocity is the word—approaching that of sound, is rushing toward the sea. Less than five minutes ago, he almost stumbled in the Altamaha River, in Georgia. Like a poor dumb brute—"

Clive Martin turned the volume down.

"He'll go into the sea at the first opportunity," he muttered. "He was brought up with the sea all around him, and he used to swim all day. I made him swim all day, close to the surface, so nobody would see him. And whenever ships came to the island, I sent him into the sea. But he loved the sea . . . and he'll want to wash his eyes." He lowered his eyes. Sandra DuBois' lower lip was trembling.

**B**IG MAN stumbled in the Altamaha River. It had been five hours since

he was blinded. He had recovered some measure of his reason. He understood now the reason for the pain, the reason for the darkness, the stickiness of the fluid that had dried around his eye sockets. He knew that his eyes were gone forever.

It was an unbearable thought. His greatest pleasure had been in his eyes. He remembered the island he was raised on. It had been a tiny, deep green jewel floating in the less green sea. He remembered the white-hot sun that hung in the sky. The sky itself, a blue, depthless bowl overhanging the sea. He remembered the white-hot sun on the water when first the master had permitted his ascension above its surface. These things were lost forever.

But now, as he stumbled a little in the Altamaha River, just a little south of Macon, his nostrils dilated hungrily—the familiar smell of the great salt ocean. A thrill of ecstasy shot through him. The sea was his home. He would go there, and he felt instinctively that his terrible wounds would heal. And then he would wait—until the master came.

He turned seaward. The smell of salt water in his quivering nostrils urged him to top speed. He felt the cool caress of the ocean at the Floridan border. Like a small boy, he dashed into it, wading out and out until the muck of the sea bottom oozed between his toes, until the cool line of water rose above his hips. He paused. It was night. He wished he could see the stars.

He dashed a handful of water across his eyes. There was a burning sensation. But the caked blood washed away. Soon, when he felt better, when he stopped groaning, he would call the master, and the master would answer.

Later, he heard a droning sound. That must have been in the morning.

He was filled with terror. He plunged out into the sea, felt the cool water turn warm, and he remembered the Gulf Stream, in whose waters he had often disported.

The drone of the planes disappeared. He hoped they would not come back. He felt that he might be happy now. Except that he was hungry. That was a new thought—he must call the master. He adjusted his huge earphones, and mouthpiece, and spoke—but there was only the crackling of static.

Then . . .

THE air was suddenly still, moisture laden, sultry, oppressive. Rolling swells, heavy and oily, lapped against his legs. A heavy wind sprang up out of nowhere.

Clouds gathered around his head. He brushed them away. Some of them broke open, deluging him. He opened his mouth gratefully. The wind became stronger. Big Man leaned against it, forcing his way toward more open sea.

At his feet, huge waves piled up. The howling force of the wind became such that his going was made actually difficult, but he kept to his course—straight into the heart of that most violently destructive of all weather phenomena, the hurricane, which, at a velocity of more than one-hundred miles an hour was beginning to envelope him.

Far away in the tropics this hurricane had been born, to rage across the sea, living on its moisture, destined to die once again once it had traveled a short distance over land.

Warm, moist air had risen from the surface of an island, had liberated rain, and vast quantities of latent heat, which had warmed the air still more, and caused a continued expansion and ascent of the air. Cooler air had rushed in, had become warmed. Then,

more precipitation, more latent heat set free—the process continued until the inrush of air had reached destructive velocities.

Thus was born the hurricane\* into which Big Man stalked.

The wind screamed. Rain lashed with stinging force against the hollows of his eye sockets. He held a hand over them, and staggered through the storm.

He dropped into a depression on the ocean floor. The water rose to his chest. He gasped. Something strange was happening. There was a horrible pressure in his head.

The storm roared upward—the pressures dropped steadily, and the pressure in Big Man's head increased proportionately. His foot collided with a sea-cliff. He stepped upward a full thousand feet, and then something cracked in his head, a pain that was worse than all the pain in his shredded eyes—as if a bone in his head had been forced or sprung into a new position.

He dropped, moaning, to a sitting position in the sea, and in one moment, the world was quiet again, the storm apparently over. Big Man did not know that the ominous calm only pres-

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\* Hurricanes have their origin in the tropics, generally between 10° and 30° of latitude on each side of the equator. Most frequently, they occur off the eastern shores of the continents; where the oceans are studded with small islands; and occasionally along the west coasts of Australia and Mexico. In the South Atlantic they are unknown.

These oceans, at the points mentioned, have outstandingly high surface temperatures. As the air has usually traveled over long stretches of warm sea, it is saturated with moisture, the actual "fuel" of the hurricane. The island theory is the most plausible of many. It arises from the fact that a land mass radiates heat faster than an area of water.

The shape of the hurricane is circular, the air constantly spirals upward, and there is a low-pressure, windless center.

The hurricane follows the Trade Winds, until it takes on a path of its own according to Ferrell's Law. It is known as a hurricane in the United States, as a typhoon in the East, as a cyclone in India, as a baguio in the Philippine Islands.—ED.

aged wind velocities as great or greater than those that had gone before, save that the wind's direction would change.

Something had happened.

Chaotic thoughts were tumbling in Big Man's brain. He remembered things, and a whole fairy-land world; that seemed to be apart from anything in his experience, now opened itself to his mind. He saw a little house, a country town outside Washington. He saw a brown-legged boy, talking to his mother. Saw a girl, younger than he. Sandra! The name leaped at him. In a dizzy flash, he was entering an airplane. His memory skipped to the plane's sickening fall. To the crash. His clothing had torn on a splintered brace. He had run whimpering up a country road, ghoulish trees on either side.

Then he saw a face. It was that of the master. The master who had fed him, taught him to speak, taught him that there was joy in bigness!

Big Man felt himself yearning back through ten years and two miles of height, to the brown-legged boy who had played with other boys. Those other boys were living life as they should. They were not big men, who had to look forward to the loneliness of bigness.

That was what the master had done to Big Man. There was nobody else like Big Man. He would be lonely all the rest of his life. That was what the master had done to him. The thought became a raging pain in his mind.

"The rat," whispered Big Man, whose real name was Eddie DuBois. "The dirty, stinking rat . . ."

THE other half of the hurricane came into being. Big Man huddled close to sea level. The rain and thunder and shrieking winds swept over and past him. In an hour they

were gone.

The sun came out. The clouds were swept away as if by magic. The surface of the sea became quiet and sparkling. Big Man, whose memory had been returned by the low pressures at the center of a hurricane, whose mind had also been maddened, came to his feet, and stalked landward, a single determination and thought written into the hard lines of his face, staring from his empty eye sockets.

All night long, Clive Martin, with Jason Smith keeping watch over him, tried to get in touch with Big Man. All night long there was no answer.

News announcers were still talking about Big Man. He had gone into the sea. A newsreel plane had sighted him, but he had run away.

During the night there were reports of a hurricane which came out of the sea and swathed a moderately destructive streak through Palm Beach, then died in the Floridan interior. And then—

"Big Man is coming in from the sea!" flashed over the radio. "I can see him from here. What a monster, this two-mile man! He's swinging in from the sea, steadily, swiftly, wading through the waves. What purpose has he in returning? For there must be a purpose, to judge by his—"

Clive turned it off. He tried to get in touch with Big Man again. His face went white as his hair. He pressed his trembling hands over the headphones. His lips opened and screamed:

"You'll stay where you are, Big Man! Where you are, d'you hear? Until I come to command you again!"

His eyes dilated. His lips twisted. He turned almost childishly wide and frightened eyes on Sandra and Jason.

"He won't listen to me!" he said in awe. "He keeps screaming for me. He's mad—mad!"

Jason scooped the headphones onto his own ears.

"Master!" came the scream. "It's me, Eddie DuBois. I want you. I'll show you when I get you that you can't do this to me. I'm going to tear you apart, that's what I'm going to do. I'm Big Man. I'm *big*. I'll stamp around and I'll break things up and I'll kill people. I want you. Master!" and thus it went, ceaselessly.

"He remembers," whispered Clive. "He's mad!"

"Not mad enough not to know what he wants," said Jason.

HE grasped Clive's arm, savagely. He whispered tensely. "You know what he means, don't you? He means he's going to destroy, kill, until he gets—you!"

"But when he gets me—he'll kill me!" Clive exclaimed in horror. Then he abruptly relaxed, and a quiet little smile came to his young-old face. He shook his head slightly. "But I won't give in to him, of course, Jason. I can't think of it. I've got too many things to give the world. The world can't afford to lose me—"

"The world can't afford to have you," Jason broke in cuttingly. "You're half a madman, Clive. You're a supreme egotist. You can't live the life of a normal man. This idea of mastering the world has been in your head too long. Now Big Man isn't yours, anymore, and the world isn't yours. You know you can never have it. You're spent, done for, your dreams have worn out, you're a shell! There's only one thing you're good for, and that's to stop Big Man. That's what you're going to do."

But still Clive smiled, quietly.

"I'm not going to be torn apart by Big Man," he said.

"You're going to get in your plane,

and you're going to fly to Big Man!" Jason rapped out. "You're going—"

Out of nowhere, apparently, Clive Martin had a gun in his hand. His face was as calm as ever.

"You're going to die, Jason," he said quietly. "And Sandra has to die, too." He stood up from the radio, trembling a little, but his purpose was strong on his face.

Jason took a backward step, smiling queerly. He still had the headphones on his head, but they were shoved away from his ears, so that he heard Big Man as from a distance, madly calling out for the man who had been his master.

"Big Man still wants you," Jason said, steadily meeting the eyes of the man with the gun. He slowly moved backward and to the side, so that the extension cord of the headphones hung a little slackly below the menacing barrel of the deadly weapon.

The gun made a little commanding movement.

"Take those things off," Clive whispered tensely, his terrible eyes blackening still more. "With both hands."

Jason removed the 'phones, and after that all he had to do to deflect the white-haired man's aim was to take a single step backward, so that the extension cord straightened up beneath the gun. The gun fired, but Jason Smith was already leaping forward. The shot caught him in the fleshy part of the arm, but snarling, he hurled himself on Clive Martin, and, with a single clean blow, dispatched him. Sandra came forward with a little cry, at once seeing the blood on his arm.

"That doesn't matter," he told her roughly, but she nevertheless made him bare his arm, and worked over it a few minutes with iodine and bandages from a first-aid kit. Her grave eyes met his, then, questioninglly.

"We're taking Clive to Big Man," he said grimly.

"I'll fly the plane with Clive in it," she said, and when he protested: "That'll be the best way, Jason. Clive has his plane fitted up for communication with Big Man. Your plane radio wouldn't affect his ears, they're so big. I'm Big Man's sister, too, and he'll listen to me, and maybe not to you."

He nodded shortly.

A FEW moments later, Clive securely tied in the rear of his plane, they slanted up into a sky that was now becoming mottled with clouds.

Big Man came in from the sea, vengeance in his heart. Vaguely, he knew the sun was westering, that if he followed the direction pointed out by the heat on his body, he would come to land. Continuously he shouted into the transmitter fixed before his lips, shouted for the master. He shook the last sea-water from his ankles as he emerged from a natural harbor directly into Brunswick, Georgia; he roared in delight as a building crumbled underfoot. He lashed about with arms and legs, laying a large section of the city in ruins. Then, as if scorning the remainder, he went on in search of new conquests.

Running at full speed across the land, his feet descended with such force that towns miles distant were shaken by the vibrations. His very footprints were tens of feet deep. He crossed the Altamaha once again. He went across Georgia. And all the while he was screaming insensately for the master. He was screaming so endlessly that he did not hear Sandra calling him.

Big Man went on, and missed Atlanta. He curved around, went north-east, crossed the Savannah River into South Carolina. He demolished Aiken.

He followed the sun again, again crossed the Savannah.

Distinctly, then, he heard Sandra calling him.

"Eddie!" Big Man froze in his tracks. "Eddie, listen to me, please. I'm—Sandra!"

"Sandra," he said blankly. He quivered. "Yes—you used to be my sister, didn't you, Sandra? That was a long time ago. . . ." His voice returned to savagery. "That was before I became Big Man. Now I have no sister—I have nothing. Sandra?" he said plaintively, almost, "I want the master. Where is he?"

"I'm bringing him," she answered swiftly. "But you have to stand still—Eddie. You mustn't destroy anything anymore. And I'll bring you the master." Her voice broke, but she continued with determination. "And then you must go back into the sea, and you must stay there. No more destruction."

"I promise, Sandra," the giant said.

He listened to her swift, comprehensive instructions. After an hour of motionlessness, feet forked on the crest of two low-lying hills, he stretched out a hand, palm upward.

From the distance two planes sounded their approach. Big Man blind, could not see them, but he knew when they landed by the tickling sensation on the flat of his hand.

JASON and Sandra climbed from their planes, and hauled Clive from the cockpit. Between them, they carried him across the actual flesh of a man's hand, up and down gullies and valleys that were wrinkles in the hand. Where the palm slanted downward at the center, they placed him. He was

conscious. His face was emotionless. There was no appeal or hate or fear in his eyes.

The girl and man stood there looking at him uneasily for a few moments, but said nothing. They could think of nothing, nothing to say. They left the bound man there, finally, and walked wordlessly back to their planes.

Jason took off, and Sandra followed. From a distance, then, she spoke into the transmitter, fighting to keep the horror from her voice.

"He's yours, Eddie."

She watched, wide-eyed.

Big Man stood motionless, hand extended. Had he closed the hand, Clive Martin would have been crushed. But the hand remained open for minute after minute. Slowly the look of savagery and hate passed from Big Man's face, and something of helplessness and self-contempt came instead. Then, with an infinitely tired movement, he wheeled in his tracks, his back to the sun, and went eastward, his hand still outstretched and now cupped a little.

The smell of the sea was in his nostrils again. He pounded toward it, set foot into its coolness once again. He went farther out. The water rose to his hips. Still he waded outward, deeper into his vast natatorium.

Sandra and Jason landed on the edge of the sea, and watched until he was lost in the watery distance.

Then she spoke into the transmitter, choking back her sobs.

"Where are you going, Eddie?"

She sought Jason's hand blindly.

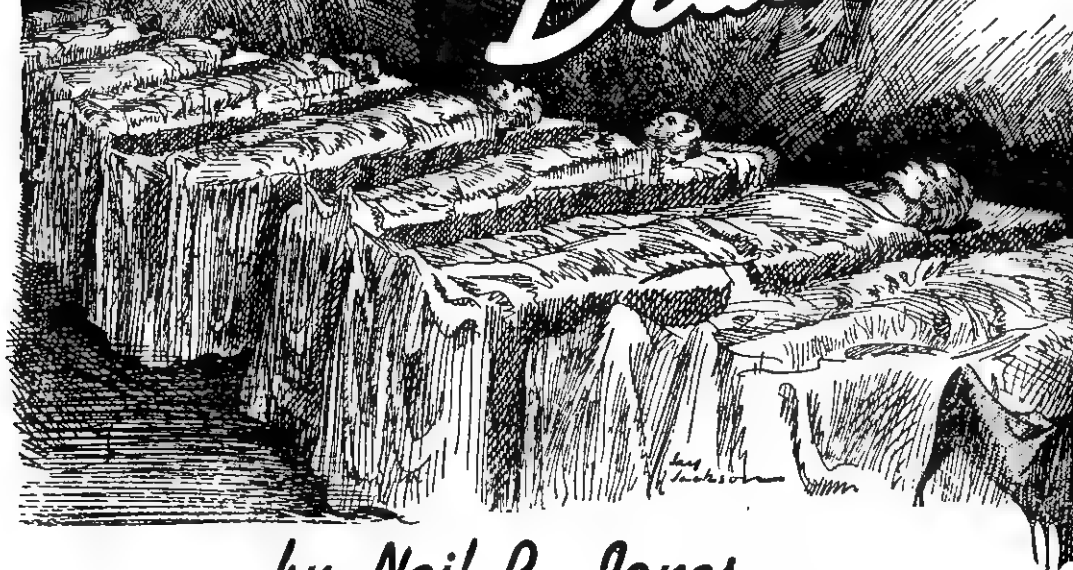
"We—the master and I—are going into the sea," came Big Man's voice, rumbling deep. "In the sea there are places deeper than I am high. And when we get there—I will not swim."

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# Priestess of the *Sleeping* *Death*



by Neil R. Jones

"COULD I trouble you for a thil capsule?"

Barry Fields turned from his contemplation of the starry depths outside the *Cosmic Star*, five days out from Earth, and his heart skipped a beat. There she stood, looking at him with her dark eyes—the lovely woman passenger with the fair skin and the raven hair. Funny how he had just begun to think of her . . .

"I've mislaid mine," she added, "and I feel a bit light-headed."

"Gladly," he said, fumbling in his pocket and extracting the small container that held the capsule so neces-

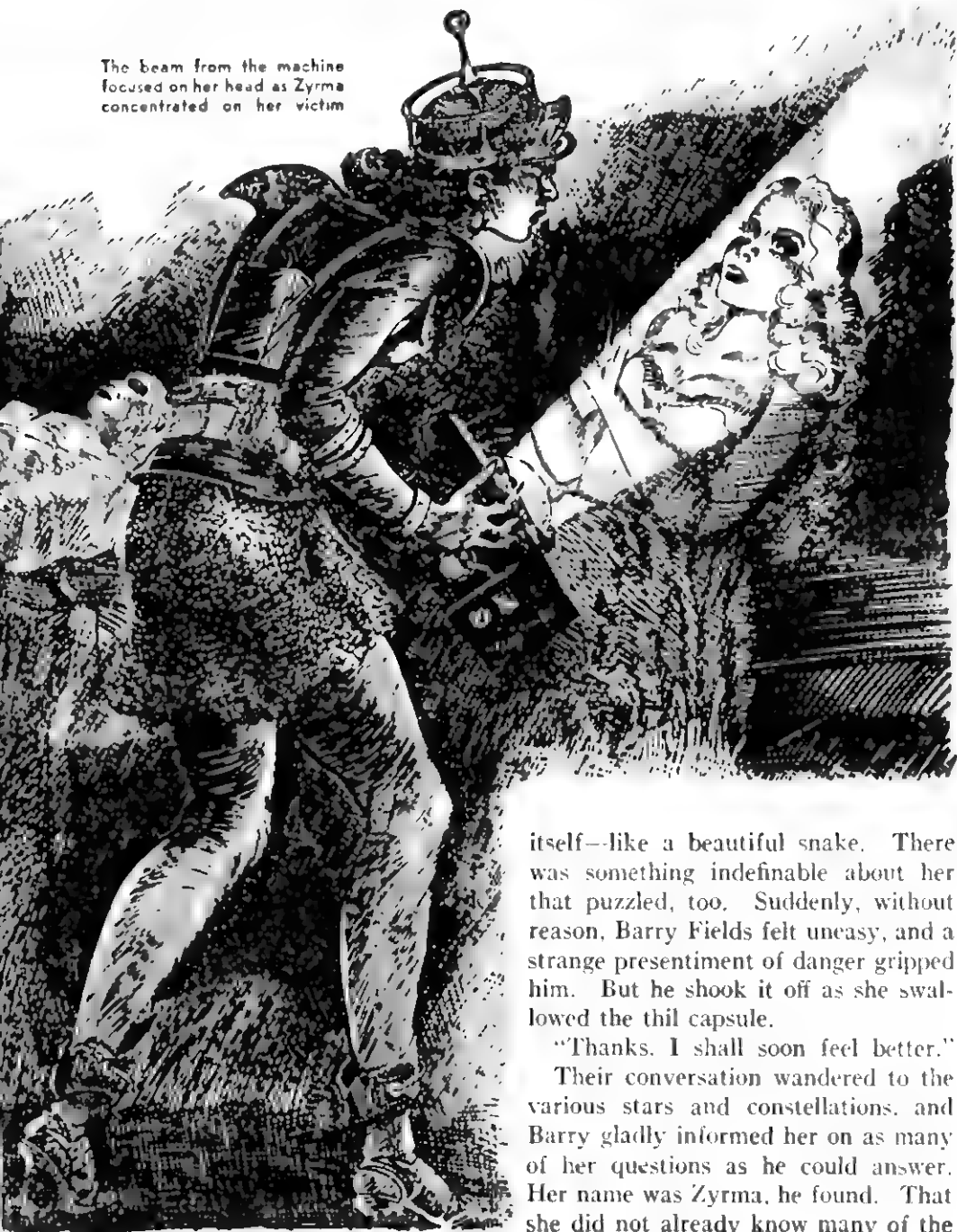
sary to allay the uncomfortable effects of lightheaded vertigo that afflicts all space travelers. Thil was the extract of a Venusian-growing plant.

She smiled disarmingly and moved sinuously forward to take the capsule. His fascinated eyes fixed on the sleek whiteness of her arm as her fingers touched his. With a start he found himself mentally comparing this amazing beauty with the girl he'd left behind.

Dolores Carter had blue eyes, a smooth, golden head, and an innocent, sweet personality, like a lovely child. This striking creature was fascination

## Beneath Zyrma's spell, Dolores Carter lay for centuries like one dead—and Barry Fields was the victim of an incredible experiment in time

The beam from the machine focused on her head as Zyrma concentrated on her victim



itself—like a beautiful snake. There was something indefinable about her that puzzled, too. Suddenly, without reason, Barry Fields felt uneasy, and a strange presentiment of danger gripped him. But he shook it off as she swallowed the thil capsule.

"Thanks. I shall soon feel better."

Their conversation wandered to the various stars and constellations, and Barry gladly informed her on as many of her questions as he could answer. Her name was Zyrma, he found. That she did not already know many of the

things she asked about seemed strange to Barry, for she betrayed a broad knowledge in many fields and was a brilliant conversationalist.

It was not until afterward that he realized her ignorance of astronomy to be feigned. And she probably had not needed the thil capsule, either. She had wanted to meet him. What was her motive? She was probably lonely. But she was interesting to know.

**I**N the days which followed, Barry Fields found himself often in the company of Zyrma. Her forceful personality so lightly veiled, and the depth of thought she occasionally revealed, held him fascinated, yet these very same facts helped to hold him at a distance. He felt no sentiment for her and doubted if he could have shown any despite her attractions. Yet it angered him sometimes to find the image of Zyrma intruding upon his daydreams of Dolores. He finally reached the point where he wished the trip over and Zyrma out of his life. Her presence was becoming objectionable. Strangely, he never felt this way when he was with her. Only when he was away from her did this feeling come over him.

He discovered, too, that she was learning much about him and he little about her, except that she was traveling for her health and was of moderate wealth and independent means. She learned about Dolores and his maturing plans of marriage. About his own business, he resorted to invention, posing as a metallurgist. He detected in her skillful handling of questions that she was testing the truth of his statements, but he was on safe ground, for he had been a metallurgist for one of the companies he was serving.

In reality, Barry Fields was a trouble shooter. He was now on his

way to Delipphon on Venus. A weird, mystic cult, the Durna Rangué, otherwise known as the Asurians, was kicking up trouble there. Many people had disappeared, either spirited or lured away by the proselytes of the Durna Rangué. What happened to people who entered the cult was unknown, but there were tempting tales of a synthetic life of pleasure that had lured many in the past to renounce their fellow men and vanish into the limbo of the cult.

Too many people had disappeared recently, however, and Barry Fields had to find out why. The Durna Rangué had always been a grim organization, and now they were becoming a menace.

One day, on the earthtime schedule the *Cosmic Star* was using, mention of the cult was brought up. Zyrma displayed an unusual knowledge of the Asurians. Barry was not surprised, for Zyrma seemed well read on all matters except astronomy, and he doubted this exception. He had tried proving it, but Zyrma's ignorance had been genuine or else she was too clever to be caught.

Concerning the cult, she waxed enthusiastic. He questioned her for anything she might know of the Asurians he did not know.

"Sometimes," she told him, "I believe I would like to depart this life for the synthetic lifetime of the cult—to realize my uttermost desires and ambitions through the induction of synthetic sense through the channels of the imagination."

"Does the cult really have aging chambers where infants are grown to adults within the space of less than an hour?"

"Through a rapid cellular metamorphosis of concentrated environment," she added, "and it requires but a few minutes."

"How did you acquire so much

knowledge of the cult?"

"I borrowed a rare volume from one of their proselytes. It was at that time I was offered the synthetic lifetime. In fact, I was so far agreed on the matter that no doubt it is the reason why I was loaned the book."

"Did he get the book back again? What stopped you?"

She laughed musically at the quick questions falling over each other and answered both patiently.

"The book went back again—and I am still where you see me because I am not yet done with this life."

"And—some day—you expect to—"

"Enjoy the synthetic lifetime?" she finished with a rising inflection. "Perhaps, if this life holds nothing better."

She leaned forward and looked deep into his eyes. A momentary feeling of dizziness and helplessness passed over him, yet he recovered himself from her disturbing influence to pursue the objective uppermost in his mind.

"Would you know where to go on Venus to make a contact with the cult?"

"Yes. I was given this information and could easily place myself in the hands of the Durna Rangué on any of the three worlds."

"What about the little men, the dwarfs?"

"Atom compression. The electrons become less distant from their positions. Their orbits are considerably shortened. These little men weigh as much as if they had remained normal in size."

"The skeletons who live and walk?"

"Experiments in invisibility. The bones still defy the process."

"The insect men?"

"I know less about that subject than you possibly do," she said. "The head is that of an enlarged insect, the rest of the body human. This hybrid is

created by surgery. The terseg birds which the Asurians use for emissaries are also products of super surgery. Besides being capable of speech, they also possess a limited intelligence."

"Is it true that they have been given small parts of human brains?" Barry asked.

She nodded thoughtfully. "The Asurians are very ingenious. It is too bad that they find themselves at odds with civilization."

CLOUDY Venus towered in the sky before them. They were only a day out of port. For the past twenty-four hours, Barry had not seen Zyrma. He felt strangely relieved, yet he was curious, feeling a concern for her absence. Then, while he was thinking of her, she appeared abruptly, as always, claiming that she had felt indisposed. He had somehow come to feel her presence. He always knew when she was back of him; he could turn around and expect to find her there. Her enigmatic smile hovered at the corners of her shapely mouth.

"Tomorrow we dock," she said. "This may be our last night together. Certainly on board," she offered invitingly.

Barry made no move to arrange for further meetings on Venus, and the conversation worked around to that first night aboard ship when he had showed her so many of the stars and constellations and identified them for her. She showed a remarkable memory in naming them over, too remarkable, Barry thought, even for her.

"— and that smaller companion star of Mizar in the curve of the big dipper's handle is Alkor. While in Orion, we have Betelgeuse and Bellatrix at one end, with Rigel and—"

"I did not name all those stars for you," Barry challenged. He was a little

angered, now, enough so to face her down in the deception she had practiced on him.

He looked into her eyes and found them mocking him, enjoying his asperity. There was a stranger deeper light in them, too, which hovered furtively as if in wait. Her smile was too masterful to suit him, but his spirit of resentment grew weak within him as suddenly her handsome features drew closer to him, moving him to response. He never knew why he put his arms around her, why he drew her close and felt her moist lips pressed rapturously against his. It was not of his own volition. All the strength drained out of him in that one kiss, and it was as if she herself had absorbed it. He felt her strong embrace, and her hot breath scorched his cheek.

Then he found himself alone with the strong impression on his mind that he belonged to her.

Profoundly disturbed and alarmed at her weird power, he decided he would not see her again. He would stay locked in his stateroom until the *Cosmic Star* had docked and all other passengers had left. He gave the steward orders to that effect, not to call him until all the other passengers had disembarked.

The steward came much sooner than Barry had expected.

"All out!" he urged excitedly.

Barry scented an emergency. The alarm of the steward was ill concealed.

"What has happened?"

"We are falling short of our objective! We are still a hundred miles from Deliphon! Our power is dead!"

## CHAPTER II

### The First Darkness

**B**ARRY burst out of his stateroom and mingled with the pressing

throng of more than twenty passengers in the observation room. Even in this alarming situation, he looked about him apprehensively for Zyrma. She was not there. He looked out into a veiled mist. They were in the cloud banks of Venus. He learned that their communication system was dead, too. The captain was inclined to minimize their danger.

"We can land somewhere in the swamp, repair the damage done and either get out on our own power or else send for help. We shall land very soon. We are losing altitude but not alarmingly so, and there is nothing to worry about in the way of a crash."

The officer proved to be right, but the landing was none too gentle. Gigantic yellow trees loomed below them out of the fog like monstrous, groping hands. The ship shuddered at their contact, tottered and swayed as giant limbs, shorn of their leaves and vines, bent and splintered beneath the ship's weight. Passengers were piled up at one end of the observation chamber, then shook to the floor as the ship gave a lurch. It upended at a sickening angle until a massive tree split its trunk and let the ship down to ground in shallow, murky water, one end held up by the fallen tree.

The swampy jungle outside teemed with life which swam, climbed or flew out of the way of the huge intruder descended from the treetops. Insects buzzed and hummed aimlessly, as those aboard the *Cosmic Star* looked out upon the steaming world. The crew worked patiently to repair the communication system, to bring space craft or airships from Deliphon.

Barry did not see Zyrma all that day, and he grew a bit apprehensive on her behalf, despite the fact that he wished to avoid the disturbing fascination she exerted over him. Night lay in the off-

ing, for a darker note had crept into the clouded scene outside, and dusk was coming on.

He was engrossed with the idea of going to Zyrma's quarters, or better still send one of the officers to look into her absence, when excited cries of his fellow passengers drew his attention outside. There was a note of jubilation and optimism. Some sort of floating vehicle was pushing its way through the tangle of lesser vegetation and vines. Barry saw its orange and yellow headlights penetrating the mist. Another followed the first.

"Our signals must have been heard after all," one of the crew observed, "though I put little faith on the strength of that sender."

The nearest port was opened in the vehicle which now ranged alongside the open space lock of the *Cosmic Star*. Several men came aboard, unmoved by the enthusiasm of those they had come to rescue. Their expressions appeared strangely detached, as if their thoughts were somewhere else, their actions mechanical, as though driven by an alien intelligence. They halted just inside the inner lock.

While the passengers and crew of the *Cosmic Star* speculated on these queer incidents, a group of smaller men entered the space ship. Muttered exclamations ran through the passengers. They were dwarfs.

A horrible suspicion grew in Barry's mind. This suspicion became confirmed with electrifying suddenness as Barry saw the next figure which stepped into the *Cosmic Star*.

He saw a great insect head with the legs and body of a man. The thing had arms, too. The monster grated its mandibles together, its black, beady eyes glistening, antennae waving excitedly. Behind the first came others, and then followed several skeletons, hollow

eye sockets staring blankly from grinning skulls.

"The cult!" shrielled Barry. "The Durna Rangué! We want none of their help!"

HIS voice brought many of the others out of a frozen stupor.

"Out with them!" cried an officer. "Push them out!"

"Don't be afraid of those skeletons! They're flesh and blood, same as us!"

"Watch those little men! They're dangerous!"

"Stop!"

A cold, incisive voice from behind the passengers cut through the murmur and babble of voices, drawing their undivided attention. There stood Zyrma, holding an electric pistol in her hand, her eyes blazing triumphantly. Just the trace of a subtle smile lurked in the corners of her delicately curved lips as her glance swept over the group and rested momentarily on Barry Fields.

And now another voice swung attention once more to the open port of the *Cosmic Star*.

"Your methods are very worldly and crude, Zyrma. You have other weapons with which to conquer. Using that destructive toy in your hand is like stooping among these unintelligent creatures to become one of them again momentarily. We Asurians are above that."

"It serves the purpose very well for the moment, Damel," Zyrma replied to the reprimand of the gray-cloaked and cowed figure on the threshold. "At least, they understand and respect its qualities."

"You wrecked this ship on Venus!" Barry accused her wrathfully. "You brought it down here—and called these devilish monsters!"

"To achieve the far, distant aims of the Durna Rangué," she replied, mocking and imperious, "and also to achieve

a few of my own aims, less distant. You are my own experiment from now on. I bid you to silence for the time being."

A fit of madness seized Barry as he contemplated this lovely female demon coldly planning the enslavement of more than a score of human beings. In a heat of rage, he advanced to seize her. Zyrma's blazing eyes caught him and held him motionless, even as his clutching hands reached out for her. Oblivion came and met him out of her dark eyes.

**W**HEN consciousness came to Barry, he was aware of a changed atmosphere. His muscles seemed unusually stiff. A swarthy, stolid face regarded him without curiosity or emotion. It was not the face of Zyrma. Her features, terrible in their sudden, arresting intensity had been impressed upon his memory. He heard her voice answering the initial, stupid question in his mind.

"That is Wal, a neophyte who may someday become an Asurian if and when his mental complexes are removed. It may require more than one lifetime."

Wal's features assumed a listening patience, as if he were Zyrma's to command. Zyrma came into view and lifted Barry into a sitting position.

He had been laying upon a dark pallet, he discovered. A gray sheet which had obviously covered him now lay rumpled across his legs. He looked around him, and his eyes widened at the sight, for he was only one of many. All around him lay silent and motionless bodies upon their separate pallets, their heads alone visible, the rest of them suggested only by the vague outlines beneath the gray sheets which draped them.

"Their life processes are suspended, like yours have been," Zyrma explained.

"What devilish experiment are you

working upon me?" he demanded. "What is it you're doing to me?"

"The experiment we began that night aboard ship—when I told over once more the stars you named for me on a previous occasion."

"I hate you—you and your damnable cult!"

"I know," she nodded sadly. "It is why the experiment is necessary. Damel knows too much of women, even me, for he accused me of personal interests in claiming you as my experiment. Yet our love will not be of the world—but unworldly and everlasting even as we of the cult. I shall make you as I am, ageless and undying from all common causes."

"I love only one—Dolores."

"That love cannot compare to what ours shall be. Hers is of the moment of your joint periods of life. That period will pass, and something deathless will take its place."

"I would as soon become betrothed to one of your monsters!"

"I gathered from your mind, when we once discussed the Durna Rangué a hidden design against us. Tell me, what is it?"

**H**ER dark eyes probed questingly into his own, and he felt their searching power within him. He realized that the information he held must not be revealed to the cult. There were other persons involved, both on Venus and the earth. He must bury these secrets from Zyrma's scrutiny. He deliberately thrust the dangerous information out of his mind, concentrating on the present situation.

"Why did you come to Venus?" she asked softly.

"My company sent me to analyze new metal workings."

"Yes," she nodded slowly, her eyes never leaving his, "so you told me

aboard ship—but why did you really come?” she demanded.

Her eyes grew larger, seeming to advance while Zyrma herself remained where she was. It was in his mind to reiterate his claim, but the words froze as they reached his tongue. A petrified lassitude gripped him, and he seemed outside of himself, listening to his betraying lips monotonously recite the information and instructions given him on Earth.

Zyrma gloated triumphantly over this choice bit of extraction, and when she had heard all, she released her grip on him. His muscles relaxed as if from tension, and he found himself once more in command of his faculties.

“Damel will be pleased to know all this,” she said. “I can report successfully so far on my experiment.”

“But your real design shall go unrealized,” he told her.

“Time will prove differently,” she promised. “There is so much time, and it is all on my side.”

“Time?” queried Barry. It was something he had not thought of before. “How long has it been?”

“This is the year 2399.”

Barry gasped, his mind grasping at the lapse of time, to measure, to weigh it.

“Fifty-two years!” he whispered hoarsely. “Unbelievable!”

“But true.”

“Where are we—on Mars?”

She shook her head, amused.

“We are inside Oberon—one of the moons of Uranus.

“Come to me,” she commanded suddenly.

Again, the old sensation of longing for her which had possessed him that night aboard the *Cosmic Star* swept over him, and he found himself in her embrace, once more thrilled by the touch of her inviting lips.

But only for a moment. She laughed and thrust him away from her. He became suddenly himself once more and recoiled from her.

“No!” she said bitterly. “It is not that kind of love I want from you, not the love that I command and that you must obey even though you hated me a hundred times more than you do. I want to feel helpless, myself, in your arms and have you do these things to me of your free will.”

Something tragic and hungry lay in her expression. Her vision lay on far horizons Barry could not see. He could only steel himself futilely against her awful power, knowing that he must yield when she commanded. Zyrma’s mood changed. She turned to him.

“I can show you something which will interest you,” she promised. “Come.”

**W**AL, catching her eye, helped Barry off the oblong dais. He took a few tottering steps before gaining his own balance. When he could walk by himself, he followed Zyrma among the gray shrouded figures with their white faces showing. Wal brought up the rear. Barry realized that he himself had been one of these semi-corpses until Zyrma had awakened him.

Zyrma stopped before a pallet. She stood between Barry and the head. He saw only the shrouded body. She stepped aside and pointed, her eyes fastened upon his every move, his slightest expression. He saw a cold, white face framed in golden hair.

“Dolores!”

He stared madly at Zyrma who stood cool and triumphant.

“You—you got her—too! You devil! What are you going to do with her? Keep her like this—or—”

Barry raised his hands suddenly against his eyes to shut out the grue-

some possibilities.

"Calm yourself," Zyrma chided him somewhat scornfully. "Nothing such as you fear will happen to her. She is another of my experiments, and as long as I claim her she is safe."

"What will you do with her?" Barry pleaded insanely.

"The worst thing I could do to her, under the circumstances," promised Zyrma. "I am going to let her grow old, let her live out her life here in the sanctuary."

The devotion in Barry's eyes and in his soft touch as he placed his hands upon Dolores drew an unpleasant glint from Zyrma's eyes. Wal looked on impassively.

"Would you like to speak to her—hear her speak to you?"

Zyrma's honeyed tones belied her loosely masked vindictiveness. Barry expressed rapid assent in an abstract manner. If he might only comfort Dolores for even a brief moment, let her know that he loved her and was near.

### CHAPTER III

#### The Fate of Dolores

**Z**YRMA stood beyond the quiet figure and brought into action a strange mechanical apparatus. A weird light played upon Dolores' brow. The girl stirred slightly, and a flush of color crept up from her neck and mantled her cheeks. Barry's heart beat a tattoo as he saw her stir slightly.

"You would speak with her?" Zyrma turned upon him fiercely. In her eyes, Barry saw the jealousy of a woman intensified and magnified. He felt her terrible control of him turning his body to stone. "You love her so dearly that you would hold her and tell her so? Look! Look your last upon her!"

Barry's mental faculties lost their sharpness, his vision became swallowed in a gulf out of which he saw only the vengeful passion of this priestess of the cult emanating from two distended orbs. These, too, faded into darkness as eternity closed over his head.

**WHEN HE AWOKE**, his first thought was for the lapse of time which Zyrma had let pass since his last awakening. He had no way of knowing. It was Zyrma who looked into his eyes.

"How long has it been?" he asked.

"Uranus and its moons have almost circled the sun once since we last spoke to each other. This is the year 2467 as Earth reckons time."

"Sixty-eight years!"

A startled thought flamed into his brain. "Dolores! What of—"

Zyrma hesitated, subdued and pensive. "She died many years ago—an old woman."

Barry felt a strange relaxation, a detachment of spirit. Dolores was at peace, and had been so for a long time.

"Are you ready to give me your love, now, Barry Fields?" Zyrma demanded. "I am eternally young. You have seen what your Dolores has come to. Will you belong to me, or must I take your brain apart and put it back together so that you will have common sense? Must I dare venture to erase certain memories? Perhaps I should give you small parts of Wal's brain, for he loves me intensely yet dares not touch me—nor would I allow him—nor would I want his kind of love from you. No—there are several other ways."

"Kill me and have done," urged Barry. "It is fast reaching the time for honest folk like me to die!"

"You are wrong. You have not lived. Your life forces have been held in suspension. You and I shall both live. I shall yet win you over, and you shall be

as I am—as Wal has been made, although Wal will never earn the gray robe and cowl though he is very clever and helpful.”

Barry was surprised to find his attitude toward Zyrma somewhat softened. It was not love, yet his hatred and resentment against her had passed. He looked up at her suspiciously, seeking the driving power of her mind as a cause, but she was exerting no personal influence over him. She divined his thoughts.

“Many strange things have been done to you,” she said. “Come I am going to show you around a bit. It will do you good.”

Pulling her cowl down over her lovely head, she led him through various parts of the great galleries in the depths of Oberon. It was all a dream to him, a conglomeration of laboratories populated with Asurians, neophytes, insect men and dwarfs. He remembered asking Zyrma why they saw no more of the skeleton men.

“Because they are no longer visible. By dint of patient experiment, the cult has at last mastered invisibility. The problem of making the bones invisible has been solved.”

For the first time, he saw several of the gifted terseg birds, descendants of those taken from Mars when the cult left there; and Zyrma led him into tomblike chambers where dreamers of the synthetic lifetime lay immersed in the gray gas of their coffin baths.

Wal followed softly in the wake of Zyrma like a faithful dog. Barry felt a growing dislike for the fawning neophyte. He meant little more to Zyrma than a robot, yet she confessed that he was clever and indispensable and that she trusted him with vital experiments and operations.

“He has an aptitude for organic replacement and shows a surgical skill

which wins even the recommendation of Damel. But his ability is specialized. He will never be worthy of the gray robe.”

**B**ACK in the chamber where he had lain so long, Zyrma faced him.

“You may choose whether you shall go back to your sleep until I think it advisable to once more arouse you, or you may retain your consciousness and be useful here. You were once interested in the metal industry. We can put you in an occupation which you will find absorbing and transcending anything you ever knew more than a century ago. Civilization has taken great steps since then, and the cult has taken even greater ones.”

Barry thought on the matter. He was doing no good to himself or anyone else by remaining suspended while years piled into decades and decades into centuries. He could learn much, and by learning he would feel gainfully employed. He also harbored the furtive idea that he might somehow escape or otherwise serve to warn civilization of its impending fate.

“I am eager to learn all that has happened since my capture on Venus,” he told her. “I shall be glad to work among metals again, but I warn you that I am making no bargains.”

She nodded her lovely head and smiled. Barry’s conscience felt humiliation. He was no longer able to despise her as he formerly had. He knew too, that she expected, and confidently, that her charms and power would eventually break down his resistance to her. A thought suddenly entered his head.

“Do you realize that I shall grow old—that I am now twenty-five, if I have not aged since I was taken—that I shall grow old and die?”

She made no reply, but her smile took a subtle turn, and she regarded him

steadily for a moment. Then the truth broke in upon his mind.

"You have made me ageless like yourself?" he exclaimed. "That is what you did to me!"

"That among other things," she told him. "You may also recognize a reception of projected thought impulses, although you cannot read a person's thoughts like I can when I choose."

**B**ARRY found that several long shafts fitted with vehicles led to important ore deposits, deep in Oberon and it was one of his first duties to become acquainted with these mines. With several Asurians and dwarfs of the cult, he journeyed to them.

Most of his work, however, was in the laboratories, and he came to take the cult and the monstrosities for granted. He became quite absorbed and lost in experiments with a new mysterious metal.

Two earthly months crept by while Uranus and its cortege of moons moved but a small distance along its eighty-four year orbit. He saw Zyrma often, and they talked together much. It reminded Barry of their conversations on the *Cosmic Star*. Wal often followed like the inevitable shadow he was. Zyrma occasionally hinted of further operations upon Barry to make him as she would have him.

Damel broke in upon his work one day.

"I am come," he said, "to bring an end to Zyrma's experiment. No one knows any greater patience than we of the cult, but it is time that results were tested and by someone beside Zyrma. Come."

Barry followed the gray-robed priest. Damel led him to a rocket vehicle which they boarded and which roared down a long, cylindrical tube at terrific speed.

Damel was silent for the most part during the long trip, yet he questioned Barry about the work he was doing with the new metal, and he mentioned Zyrma once, making an indirect inquiry regarding her. The question, Barry realized, was more or less inconsequential, sufficient to set him thinking of her, and he felt the quick, searching probe of the Asurian's intellect.

They left the rocket vehicle at the end of its long run, and Damel led the way along newly dug corridors where several of the dwarfs and insect men were employed in finishing off walls and ceilings. Damel took him upon a familiar scene. Rows of silent figures covered with gray sheets lay on their pallets, faces visible, suspended between life and death, like he had been much of the time.

"If what I have learned from you while we have traveled here is true, you had better prepare for a shock," Damel quietly informed him, "for I see that Zyrma has kept the truth from you."

Damel stopped and pointed to a face. Barry gasped in mingled surprise and delight. It was Dolores!

"She sleeps! She is not dead!"

The Asurian assured him of this.

"She did not grow old and die!"

Barry cried out indignantly. "Zyrma lied!"

"Yes, Zyrma lied, for she evidently has designs of her own," Damel admitted ruefully. "And the experiment, if such it was, is a failure, according to what I was given to understand."

"The experiment?"

"It is evident without a doubt that you love this woman—that Zyrma has failed even after a hundred and twenty years to turn your love to hate, or at least to indifference."

Barry suddenly felt his old self again. Zyrma's practiced deception

aroused in him once more the old hatred of her and of the cult. Sight of Dolores had undone what Zyrma had accomplished during his last period of oblivion.

"We shall now test her reactions, to make the experiment complete," said Damel.

He set the reviving machinery \* to work upon the golden-haired girl, and an ecstatic power seized Barry as he saw her open her eyes and slowly turn her head. He leaped forward and raised her to a sitting position. For a moment, she stared wildly, unseeing, then passed a hand across her forehead, looking at him wonderingly with slowly returning senses.

"Barry!" she softly exclaimed. "Barry!"

The revered name escaped her lips in a sigh of pent emotion as she pulled him close and laid her bewildered head upon his shoulder. He clasped her in his arms and smoothed back the long waves of her hair and looked into her eyes.

"Are you all right, dear?"

"Barry—they have captured and kept us apart so long! What do they mean to do with us in this horrible place? We should have been dead years ago! Twice before this I have been revived—but both times by that awful woman who would keep you from me!"

"How long ago—"

"Damel!"

The priest's name cut sharply into Barry's words. Both Barry and the Asurian turned quickly. There in the doorway stood Zyrma, her cowl shoved back, her hair disheveled, her eyes

shining large and dark in the unnatural whiteness of her face.

## CHAPTER IV

### Zyrma's Change of Heart

"WAL told me of your coming after Barry! I had an idea you were up to something like this!" Her voice rose shrill and in trembling anger. "Would you undo my work of more than a century?"

"Your secret work is in vain, Zyrma," the gray-cloaked priest told her. "He loves you not. Your experiment is valueless, too. You should have been less interested in him personally and attacked the problem from a different angle. Your aim was never for the good of the cult but to satisfy a personal whim and obsession which befits you strangely as a sister of this order."

"He is my property!" she shrieked in a rage. Her eyes were flaming dark coals. "He is my experiment to do with him as I see fit! The girl is mine, too! It was I who had her taken!"

"You have achieved but a common result which any blundering idiot might have accomplished," Damel derided her softly, pointing a long, lean finger at Barry and Dolores holding each other closely.

Zyrma focused her terrible eyes upon her pair of pawns, and Barry felt Dolores shudder and grow limp in his arms. A desperate resolve to resist Zyrma arose in him, and he battled momentarily, but he was unable to prevail against her concentration of power. He, too, descended in a giddy whirl to the dark abyss into which he had fallen before, Dolores still clasped tightly in his arms.

WHEN BARRY FIELDS came to his senses again, he felt that a longer time

\* It was by a form of powerful hypnosis that Zyrma kept her subjects in the death-like trance. It was undoubtedly the purpose of the machine to intensify the strength of her mental control waves when the subject was to be awakened, and to stir motor centers of the nervous system into action once more.—Ed.

than usual had passed. Dolores had been in his arms. Now she was gone. Odd, he realized, to have thought of that. It must have been a long time ago. His eyes focused on the dark beauty of Zyrma looking down upon him.

"Have I changed any?" she asked.

"No," he honestly replied. He was unable to see any change in her. "How long has it been this time?"

"A hundred and fifteen years. This is the year 2582. It has been very many long, lonesome years since I have talked with you, though I have looked upon you often. Come," she said, lifting him up. "Rise and walk—and tell me what you think."

Barry arose slowly as active life once more surged through him. He noticed a difference in his surroundings.

"We are no longer in Oberon—are we?" he turned to her doubtfully. "This gravity is not the synthetic kind. It is more like that of Venus—or Earth!"

He stared at her suddenly, realizing instinctively that he was on Earth. The feel of gravity and the kindling light in Zyrma's eyes as he mentioned the mother world substantiated his suspicion.

"Yes!" she hissed triumphantly. "We are in Mexico City. We have sanctuaries on Earth now."

Barry shook his head slowly.

"Why did you let me sleep so long?" he asked.

"Because Damel ordered it so. He now presides in Prague, second only to Olo who is in Chicago. I meant to bring you back after half a century, but Damel decided it would be best to wait. All those we dared not trust we accorded the same treatment. Now that our earthly position is consolidated, it does not matter."

"And what of Dolores?" Barry ventured, fearful of the reply.

"Oblivion—long ago, fully a hundred years and more," Zyrma dismissed the mention of her with an airy wave of her hand. "Do you think I would leave her around to keep you from me—after I was well on the way to making you see reason once?"

"What happened to her?"

"She was used in an unsuccessful experiment. That is all I can reveal."

Barry shuddered, and Zyrma placated him. "That was all more than a hundred years ago, and she never knew what happened to her."

"Perhaps it is better so," he said.

"Of course it is. Now that she is off your mind, you can rise to greater heights of attainment. We shall rule here, you and I, eventually, when you have proved yourself fit and willing—and we shall not always have to stay here. I can procure a recluse for us in any country on this planet you choose. Anything we desire is ours. You shall soon learn to love me. I shall not have waited in vain."

ZYRMA'S eyes grew large as she ambitiously speculated on their future, her vision once more on distant horizons. Barry had by now learned wisdom. He did not show his revulsion at all he had heard, especially concerning Dolores. Though he admired Zyrma's crisp beauty and her profundity of mind, her cold blooded ruthlessness always remained an effective barrier. To him, she had always symbolized the inhumanity of the Asurians. The only way she might bring him to her arms was by the greater power of her mind, and this did not satisfy her.

"You may return to your work in metallurgy," she told him, descending out of her web of speculation.

Barry decided to play a waiting game. He did not entirely believe that Dolores was dead. Zyrma had lied to

him about this before, and Damel had shown him the lie. Despite the extreme chance of his ever seeing her again, it was nevertheless a hope to which he might cling and sustain himself. He realized that if Dolores still existed, Zyrma knew where she was.

Barry found the sanctuary to be a vast place just lately finished. It was because of this that Zyrma had delayed his revival. He found himself free to wander where he would, yet often he knew that he was spied upon. He caught Wal slinking in nearby corridors, and several times he felt the prying eyes of invisible neophytes who two centuries earlier, at the time of his capture on Venus, would have been skeleton men.

Barry was not allowed outside the sanctuary, nor did he ever find a way even to look out. All he ever knew was the artificial light exuded from walls and ceilings which cast no shadows.

He wandered among the coffin baths where dreamers lived a synthetic life-time, he examined the faces of every one, as well as those whose life forces hung suspended beneath the gray sheets; he even looked among the dead bodies preserved in a strangely smelling atmosphere of chemicals; yet he did not find Dolores, nor had he hardly expected to so easily.

Wal, he found, worshipped Zyrma to an insane, yet patient, degree. Covertly, Barry witnessed one of his humble advances upon the priestess of the cult. The neophyte cringed and grovelled, his face an expression of desire for the woman he dared not touch. Zyrma regarded him in masterful triumph and disdain; then, as he crept slowly nearer on hands and knees, his dark face raised supplicatingly to hers, she laughed and placed the sole of her sandal against his face, pushing him into an ungainly heap. Wal slunk off,

disheartened and gloomy, to meditate on his disappointment.

Another time, Barry heard Wal whiningly plead his case, pointing out the futility to Zyrma of her love for him, Barry, which was not reciprocated and never would be. In this instance, Zyrma's anger rose, and Wal stood momentarily petrified beneath the glare of her fiery eyes; then she allowed him to beat a frightened retreat and wisely avoid her presence for the time being. Wal knew Zyrma well.

ONE day, Zyrma disappeared; and days later, when she returned, Barry instantly detected a change in her. The substance of what she had to tell him explained a great deal regarding her altered demeanor.

"I lied to you again," she said, almost mechanically, and with a faraway expression in her eyes. "Dolores is not dead. I have kept her all this time. I know, now, that you will never love me, and to earn what devotion and respect from you that I can, I am going to give her back to you.

"She, too, is now made proof against age, and if you find her a little changed in her outlook on life, be patient with her, for the power of semi-immortality is not always taken on with a minimum of counter-effect as in your own case. You must both remain here in the sanctuary. You cannot leave it."

Barry's heart bounded with joy. "Where is she?" he asked.

Zyrma, her sad eyes turning to Wal, nodded and motioned to the neophyte who opened a curtain behind them. In his anticipation, Barry missed the masterful glance which Wal gave Zyrma. Instead, his attention was focused upon the radiant figure of Dolores who stepped forth from under the risen curtain. She was more lovely and compelling than ever.

"Barry!"

He thrilled to her sweet voice, so familiar, even over so long a period of time. She advanced to him and he took her in his arms. A heavenly touch had fallen upon the sanctuary. He would gladly remain there with Dolores. He turned to thank Zyrma, but she was gone. Wal lingered hesitatingly.

"Leave us alone," Dolores spoke to the neophyte.

Wal tried the way by which Zyrma had gone and found it locked. Disappointment filled his face as he left them to themselves.

Barry was with Dolores almost continuously in the days which followed. As Zyrma had prophesied, he found Dolores considerably changed. The resistance to age and death given her by the Durna Rangué had made her more dominating and aggressive, for one thing, although she had lost nothing in beauty or mental brilliance. Rather, she had gained in the latter sense. He missed her old, gentle ways, and she sometimes appeared to sense this and tried to become her old self, but it was obviously a studied effort of which Barry was aware.

In his joy at once more possessing her whom he had considered lost to him, he overlooked these changes and adapted himself to them. He found Dolores more possessive and passionate in her love for him than she had been before. What strange, tortuous channels of human conduct these Asurians played upon with their scientific arts. It was she who would have him with her all the while, as if the pent up love for him had accumulated over two centuries to at last demand constant expression as a surfeit. He found no time to devote to his experiments in metals, and he did not see Zyrma any more, for she never came to seek him out as she once had.

## CHAPTER V

### The Vengeance of Wal

WAL came a few times while he was with Dolores, and upon being questioned sullenly replied that Zyrma was busy and had been so for some time. Barry found that Wal afforded Dolores more deference than he gave to him, but was not surprised. The neophyte had always looked upon him with indifference, and Barry now believed that this indifference had come to a point where the neophyte hated him because of his being the object of Zyrma's love.

Once, Barry came upon Dolores and Wal talking alone. Wal appeared angry and dark of countenance.

With Dolores, Barry reviewed their past lives. Each told of their separate experiences since the cult had made them captives. Dolores appeared particularly interested in Barry's relations with Zyrma and what his reactions had been to her advances. Barry regarded this curiosity as typically feminine. He found that Dolores had developed an indifferent regard for the cult, neither accepting nor condemning the Asurians. This led him to suspect that, like himself, her brain had been slightly tampered with during the process of inuring her against age. He was her world, and she appeared to be living through him.

Barry decided to insist on seeing Zyrma. He was surprised to find how much he missed her, especially her wise counsel. There were several points he wished to discuss with her concerning Dolores. He finally freed himself from Dolores on a pretext and went to Zyrma's quarters. This time, he found the outer entrance not only unlocked but open as well. He would take none of Wal's excuses this time. He stopped. He heard metal rattling against metal.

Stepping softly inside, he came upon Wal fumbling at the inner door of Zyrma's sanctum.

How strange, he thought. The neophyte usually came and went as he chose. Yet the chambers were locked, and Wal was either picking or else destroying the lock. If Zyrma had locked the place against him, what of her wrath when she should discover what he had done?

Barry stepped back out of sight, deciding to watch the further mysterious actions of Wal. He commenced to doubt that Zyrma was in the sanctuary. Where had she gone?

While he pondered this question, Wal suddenly realized results, for Barry heard him open the inner door and enter. He hastened light of foot to a position outside the doorway. He heard Zyrma's voice.

"What do you want?"

Barry wondered at the lack of asperity he would naturally have expected from Zyrma, but Wal's truculence surprised him even more.

"I have come for you," the neophyte replied, his voice trembling with suppressed emotion. "You're mine! I shall not be held off any longer!"

Barry waited for the visitation of wrath to descend upon Wal's luckless head. Instead, a note of fear hung in the words of the priestess.

"Go away! You dare not do this!"

Then Barry heard a scuffle of feet, Wal's labored breathing and a sharp scream. Still puzzled at these topsyturvy events, Barry obeyed instinctive promptings which sent him to the aid of this amazing woman who once would have scorned any assistance and held any man at bay through the force of her vibrant will.

**W**AL, his face a mask of passion, struggled with Zyrma and did not

see the entrance of Barry until he was spun around by a hand upon his shoulder. Rage succeeded fleeting surprise, and he swung a clumsy blow at Barry. The latter seized the upflung arm, and Wal was sent spinning and crashing into a nearby corner where he lay stunned.

"Barry!" Zyrma's voice rose on a glad note, and she was in his arms.

Dumbfounded by the unexpected happenings, Barry seemed no longer capable of amazement when he realized an affinity of the same relief Zyrma expressed that her arms were about him.

"Oh, Barry, do you realize what has really happened—who I am? I am Dolores—not the person you think you see! Something terrible has happened, something these devils have accomplished—this one whose body I occupy!"

"Dolores!" he breathed, scarcely audible. "Now I see why—" His voice trailed off into a chaos of churning speculation. "Then Dolores isn't you! She is—"

"She is Zyrma! Our brains have been changed around! Wal did it! She promised Wal, so he says, that he could then have me, her body, but she has not kept her bargain with him yet because she fears that Damel or someone else higher than she is will come and find it out!"

Lights flooded Barry's mind. The strangeness of Dolores, her aggressive passion and many other of her actions were explained. It was the only way Zyrma could win him, by this desperate deception. Wal had made a brain transposition. For a moment, Barry was at a loss. His mind was in a whirl. Dolores, in Zyrma's body still clung to him. Finally, he spoke.

"We shall go and face Zyrma with the truth and threaten her with a revelation to Damel of what has happened. We can then come to a settlement of

some kind."

It was a dangerous situation, and Barry felt misgivings, but it was the only way. He knew of no method by which they might escape the sanctuary. His misgivings deepened as he saw that Wal had stolen away.

**T**OGETHER, they set out to find Zyrma. Asurians and creatures of the cult accorded Dolores the usual deference they paid to Zyrma. As for Barry, it was not unseemly for him to be seen with the priestess, although none of them had seen much of the priestess of late, and then she was inevitably in the company of the golden haired girl.

They found a rather perplexed dwarf in the chambers supposedly those of Dolores. He made humble obeisance to her whom he thought to be Zyrma.

"Where is Dolores?" Barry questioned him.

"Wal carried her off. That way," the dwarf pointed.

"Carried her?" demanded Barry. "But why?"

"She was injured," said the dwarf, simply. "She was unconscious."

Here lay more mystery. Barry knew what lay in the direction the dwarf had pointed. The aging chambers.

"Come," he urged.

They moved rapidly down the long corridor which Wal had reportedly taken with his unconscious burden. The dwarf hurried after them excitedly on his short legs, shrilling a weird whistle. As they hurried along, more of the dwarfs joined them from side corridors. Several carried the silver explosion rods, a weapon which exploded the adrenal glands of its victims. They ranged themselves deferentially behind their priestess and looked to her for guidance.

Turning a bend in the corridor, they

saw Wal hurriedly adjusting the knobs and dials beside the closed door of an aging chamber. He turned, saw them coming and loosed a shrill screech of laughter, then he backed protectively against the board of controls to the aging chamber, a snarl on his face. A deep drone from inside grew to a whistling whine, and they heard a weak hammering against the door. Barry stood petrified. He knew what these aging chambers were capable of doing.

"She is in there?" he asked of Wal.

"Yes!" he snapped vindictively. "She will never cheat or wrong me again! Perdition take her! She had no chance to hold me back this time! I came up quietly behind her!"

And Wal made a significant gesture of striking someone over the head.

"She no longer blocks me!" he shouted. "I can take what I want! I can take what I want!"

His crazed eyes fastened avidly on Zyrma's lovely figure and he leaped forward to seize her. Barry sprang to intervene, but it was unnecessary. Wal's shattered body fell to the floor in a spatter of blood. One of the dwarfs held his explosion rod grimly leveled.

**B**ARRY fumbled at the door of the aging chamber, suddenly finding it open as the panel slid rapidly and noiselessly aside. The droning hum increased in volume, and the blue haze was so thick inside as to be impenetrable to their sight. Then, out through the doorway and into the corridor staggered a weak, pathetic figure.

It was an old woman in remnants of black clothing, black and partly disintegrated by the awful concentrations of the aging chamber. Her eyes were watery, her face and hands wrinkled, the veins standing out prominently. Straggling wisps of gray hair hung

about her face.

She stared at them, mumbling incoherently for a moment. In her eyes lay but a shadow of the old power Barry had always associated with Zyrma. There was an aged resemblance to Dolores' body, but also, Barry recognized in her face characteristics associated with Zyrma.

"Too late!" she croaked. "I was in there too long! I—"

Zyrma tottered weakly and fell to the floor beside the dead neophyte who had been her undoing, dying of extreme old age.

They stood fascinated, momentarily spellbound. Then, as more creatures of the cult gathered, and Barry saw the gray-robed figure of an Asurian coming, he roused Dolores from her stupor.

"Come!" he urged. "You are the priestess, now! You are Zyrma—until we have won free of this hellish place! Give your orders—like she once did through you!"

Imperiously and coldly, Dolores ordered the dwarfs to carry away the

dead bodies and to halt the process of the aging chamber. She then dismissed the other minions of the cult to their various duties on which they had been engaged. Then she and Barry returned to her quarters into which Wal had lately broken.

It was there that she relapsed from the strain under which she had held herself and cried in Barry's arms.

"We must plan to get out of here," he said, "to some place on this broad earth where we can hide, and have each other. As Zyrma, you are free to go where you will. We shall find happiness yet, even in this turbulent world and time two hundred years beyond our own. It will not be difficult, now that things have happened the way they did."

Barry held Dolores close. In the flesh, she was Zyrma, lovely priestess of the cult, but from her eyes, the windows of the soul within, there radiated the simple and deathless love of Dolores.

THE END

## « « ODD SCIENCE FACTS » »

**I**N World War I, an Army division still slogged forward on its stomach, so to speak, and 4000 horsepower was all the extra energy available. Nowadays, a modern Army division must have 187,000 horsepower to move its tanks, its trucks, its motorcycles, guns and cannon.

\* \* \*

**I**KE the Dodo, even bleached cornflakes are becoming extinct. Movie producers used to sprinkle them around the sets whenever snow was needed. Now whole movie sets are being refrigerated for greater realism. To carry the point even more uncomfortably, one producer of a tropical picture recently broiled the whole cast in 98 degrees F.—for proper atmosphere.

\* \* \*

**D**EAD men tell no tales—except in a post mortem. Dr. Raymond Pearl of Johns Hopkins University, a noted authority on mortality statistics, reported recently on the records of 2000 dead men. The only difference between those who lived their full span, and those who died comparatively young, was in the heart rate. The average pulse of the former was below the human average of 72

heartbeats a minute. Those who didn't live so long had a faster pulse. In other words, Dr. Pearl tentatively concluded, the duration of life generally depends on the *rate* of living.

\* \* \*

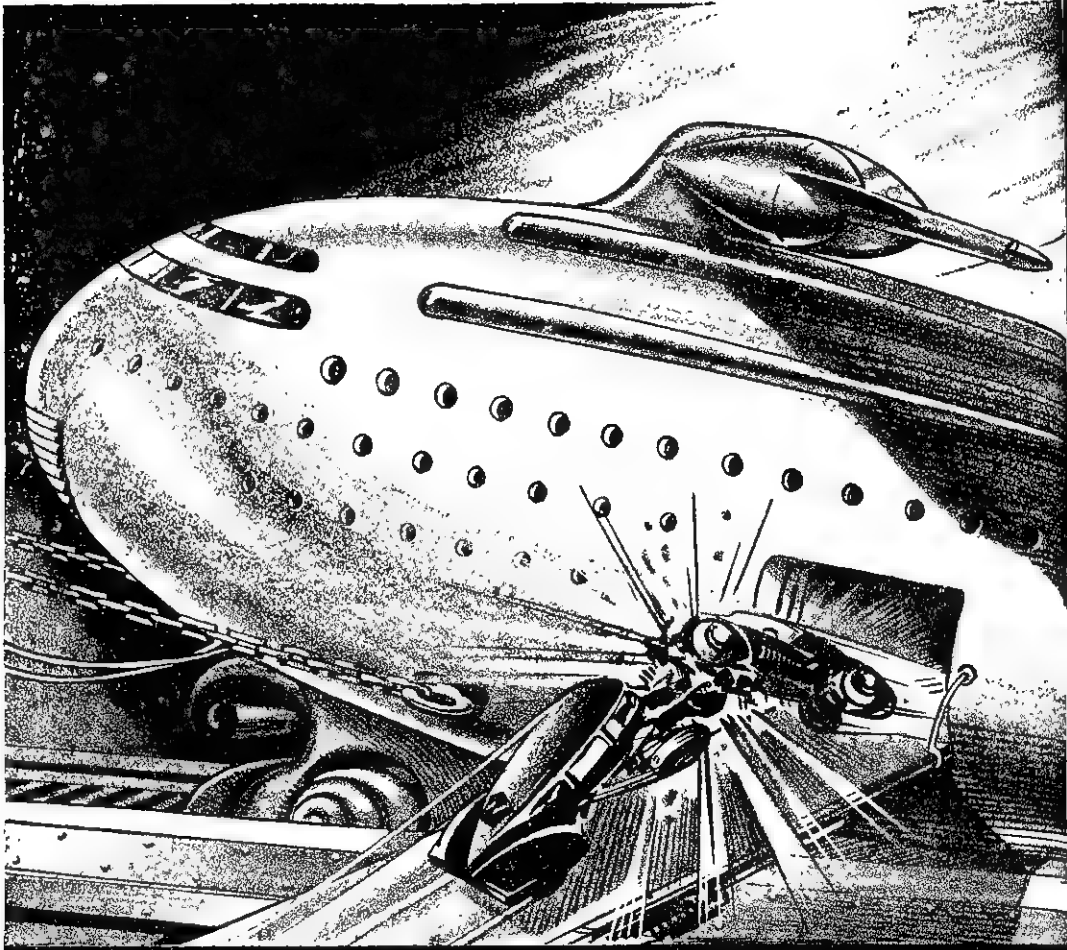
**A**MERICA, faced on both sides of the continent by potential enemies overseas, can still be thankful in this year 1941 that there are still at large, in the world, some 20,000 kinds or species of insect pests not yet found in the United States.

\* \* \*

**I**N the last war, there was a shortage of TNT. This can't happen a second time. Toluol, the basic raw material of TNT, is now made by "cracking" petroleum under pressure, in the same way that gasoline is processed. Toluol is a liquid of the benzene family, and was previously obtained from by-products of coke and illuminating gas.

\* \* \*

**E**VEN that old household standby, glue, has been streamlined. The new process is proof against bacteria, rot, stain and water. It's supplied in powdered form. Mixed with a little water, it stands up like a plastic.



# *INVISIBLE RAIDERS*

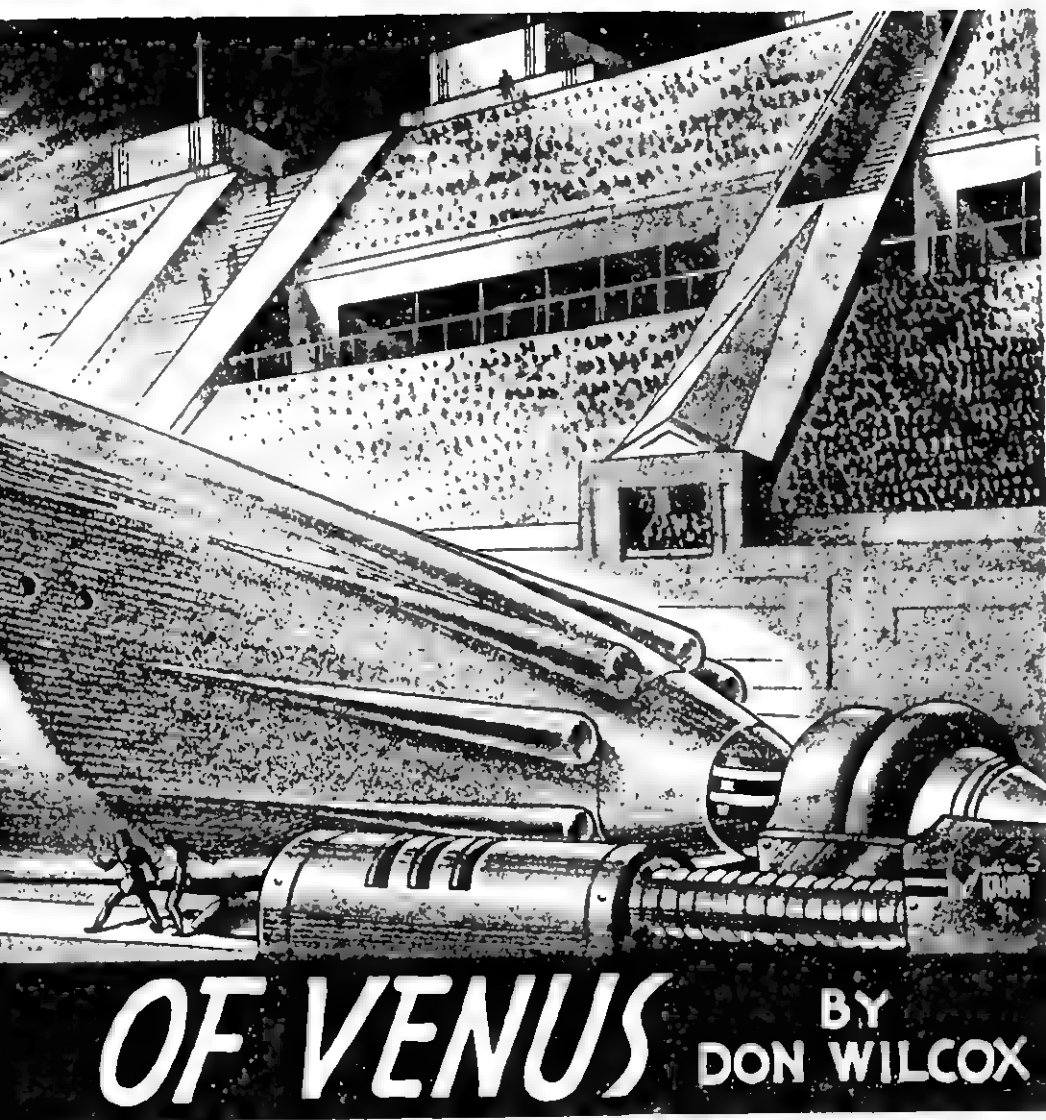
**The ship crashed, and Venusians came out of it—only to vanish into thin air. Where did they go? What was their mission here?**

**Y**ES, I saw the crash. The big ship nosed out of the cloud with its counter-motors screaming, scraped its belly against the mountain-side, showered sparks into the pine trees. The rip and roar echoed down the valley, and I'll bet the summer-cot-

tage people down there were scared out of their wits.

The ship almost nosed over, hovered upright, then fell back with a big bang. Its big chrysalis-shaped body sprayed black smoke.

"The damned dials jammed—"



# OF VENUS

BY  
DON WILCOX

"Shut up and get moving!"

Over the clatter of falling wreckage I heard the violent shouts of several men, speaking in perfect Venusian! Through the smoke and dust I saw the lightning escape of most of the ship's occupants.

They flew from the place like so many colored bats out of hell. No expression could better describe it, from the Earth-man's viewpoint. With a flutter of their yellow hair and silk shirts they skimmed across the clear-

ing like blazes of colored light—and disappeared!

My eyes tried to follow them, but invisibility engulfed them almost instantly.

Then and there I determined to follow them. I had my own reasons. But before I had run more than twenty steps I heard a lot of yelling from down the mountainside. The men from the summer homes came running at break-neck speed, and women trailed after them gasping and wailing in terrified

excitement.

I edged back into a clump of rocks and waited.

The people from the summer homes went after the wreckage like born heroes. They dragged two bodies out of the flames—both dead. They beat out the fires. They muttered disappointment because they weren't able to save any lives. They pondered over where the ship had come from and why so large a ship should contain only two men.

"It's from Venus," declared one erudite rescuer, peering through his spectacles at a bit of printed matter. "This is a scrap of one of the most popular Venus newspapers. I've often read it—"

The crowd gathered around him respectfully. It was a mark of education, in the thirtieth century, to be able to speak and read the languages of the other planets.

"It's a Venus newspaper, but that doesn't tell us anything," the man-about-planets continued. The crowd rummaged around trying to find clues, but their speculations came to nothing. The governments of Venus, they agreed, were friendly to this planet; there was nothing about the wreckage to prove that this was a government ship, however. The crowd fell to arguing over whether the mission of these two men had been a friendly or an unfriendly one. Then police sirens came up the mountainside and the officers took the situation over and jotted down enough facts to make a perfunctory report.

**A**T last everyone was gone. I crept out of hiding. I took a wide circling walk around the clearing.

The late afternoon sun was right to show up the thousand or so foottracks that the milling crowd had left, and

likewise the tracks that extended out beyond the central stamping ground. These I examined with care. They were automobile tracks. They converged toward one of the nearby mountain roads. Anyone but me might have mistaken them for the tracks of mountain woodsmen or picnickers. But I knew better.

And I knew I would play the devil trying to follow the eight or ten Venusians that had slid away the instant the ship crashed to a stop. I sat down on a stump and grumbled at myself and stabbed at my boot sole with a pocket-knife.

I glanced back to notice what tracks I had left. Nothing but faint ones. They might have been any Earth-man's tracks. Oh-oh! What was *that*? A bit of dead tree had been freshly snapped off. I walked over toward it.

Bonk!

I bumped into something metallic. The suddenness with which I struck the thing—or it struck me—made me stagger backward. I saw nothing, other than the trees ten yards ahead of me. Or almost nothing. I think, strictly speaking, that I saw a little patch of grayness hanging before my eyes—and after that bump a spot or two before my eyes was nothing to be surprised at.

I glanced about to make sure that no one was hurling rocks at me, and started on.

Bonk-kerbonk!

I stopped dead still. I took time out to rub my handkerchief over my skinned nose and bruised forehead. I blinked at the distant trees and moved toward them with my hands outstretched. A cool surface pressed against my hands—a *surface that I couldn't see*.

The object was solid, metallic, and utterly invisible. And big! I groped my way around it, like a blind man. I passed my hands over the domed roof,

the rounded nose, the built-in headlights, the front bumper—then back again over the sides of the tear-drop-shaped body to the rear bumper. Say, it was a beaut! I wished I could have seen it!

A late model? Undoubtedly Venus' latest, apart from the invisibility of the thing. And, as every man-about-planets knows, Venus has forged ahead in car building this century. I opened a door and climbed in.

I patted my hands over the invisible seat and floor just to make certain that no invisible fellow-passenger was in with me. Then I settled myself at the invisible controls and poked around until I struck the invisible starter button.

I backed out into the clearing. The atom-powered motor was perfectly noiseless. Except for the sense of touch at my hands and the feeling of the cushions supporting my body I could have sworn I was being wafted along by the air. The sensation was so baffling that for an instant I forgot my business and backed up *thump!* against a tree stump.

I shot forward and took the winding mountain road. For the first few minutes I was like the fellow riding off to war who got such a kick out of the scenery along the way that he forgot all about his kill-or-be-killed mission and shouted, "I wouldn't have missed this trip for anything!" I forgot the big deal ahead.

**Z**ANG! What a thrill! Imagine, if you can, sailing down the road with a fresh breeze blowing at you—flying, as it were, in a sitting position about three or four feet off the surface of the pavement. You look down and watch the road fly by under you. You can see everything back of you, and on both sides.

Now and then you see a fine spray of

dust shooting back from where the front wheels must be, but it never reaches you. It blows back under the invisible floor.

Through the mirror over my windshield I could get a complete view of everything behind me, in spite of the fact that the mirror itself was invisible. It gave me the impression of having one little window full of changing scenery from some detached world, floating constantly just an arm's length ahead of me.

Gradually I became aware that there were a few spots back of me that were floating along in a never-changing formation. I pulled out to the side of the road and stopped.

I got out and felt my way around the car. One of the spots was a visible patch of the rear bumper, the other two were part of the sidewall. Two-and-two clicked together and I had it. Those sidewall spots were where I had bumped myself when I first stumbled against the car. The patch on the rear bumper was where I had struck the stump.

In other words this new "light-metal" which the Venusians had invented must be handled with care. Its invisibility was a delicate thing. As long as the rhythmic electronic action of its matter was undisturbed, light leaped through it as if it weren't there. But give it a rap and it would come into view.

To be sure my theory was on the right track, I took a stone and thwacked the outer ends of the front bumper. At once I could see tiny spots of metal hanging in the air where my stone had struck. Spots no bigger than postage stamps.

I repeated the process on the rear bumper. Thus I had the outside dimensions of my vehicle defined by four spots. I would watch these spots if I

should ever run into a narrow passage. But no one else, I contended myself, would be likely to see them, as small as they were.

Down the road I went at high speed. As my familiarity with my vehicle increased I drove with greater confidence. A city loomed up on the broad plain at the foot of the mountains and I was certain that the silk-shirted Venusians who had escaped death at the crash of their ship had gone that way.

Perhaps you do not understand why I should be so cocksure about them. Very well, take my word for it. I knew what the rescuers and the police who had gathered at the scene of the crash did not know.

I knew that that crash was not disaster enough to keep every living Venusian from jumping into the invisible cars, that hung under the fins of their big ship, to dash off at full speed.

I crowded the throttle.

AT last I approached the outskirts of the city. I pulled up at the first filling station. Atomic motors have a way of thirsting for oil now and then.

The automatic bell brought the filling station attendant to the door. He stood there scratching his head as if wondering what the devil had made that bell go off.

I knew he couldn't see me. I was satisfied that the all-around windshield, which I had closed just before pulling to a stop, protected me from sight. A glance at the filling station window proved my point. There was no reflection of either the car or me.

Not until I opened the door and stepped out. Then I could see myself, plain as day, stepping out of invisibility. The filling station attendant jumped so suddenly his cap fell off.

"Two quarts of oil," I said.

The poor fellow blinked. He reached

down and picked up his cap without ever taking his eyes off me.

"I desire two quarts of your best grade of oil," I repeated in my most precise English.

"Whatcha gonna do with it? Pour it out on the ground?" the fellow asked.

"Does it make any difference as long as I pay you?" I retorted waving a bill of good American money at him. "Just hand me the oil. I'll take care of it."

He did it, and for the next two minutes I had my back toward him while I fed the invisible engine. Then I turned around and gave him the bottles.

"Well, I'm damned," he said, and his eyes were bugging like doorknobs. "First time I ever knew anyone to drink the stuff!"

"Tell me, friend," I said, pausing with one foot in the invisible car door, "is there any way to get through the city without running into too much traffic?"

"If I were you I'd take a wide swing to the left. There's a nut house on the right."

"Would you be so kind as to tell me how far it is to New York? Could you give me a map—"

"We don't put out no accommodations to hitchhikers."

"But I'm a cash customer—"

I was wasting my breath, for at that moment another customer pulled in so close back of me that I thought he was going to smack me. He stopped inches short of my bumper spots.

Speaking of spots, I was in one. I knew it was high time for me to get going. The attendant was sure to make a round of the other car shortly, and if he stumbled into me my secret would be out. Chances are, if he wasn't too baffled, he would call up some friendly cop and announce his discovery. Vaguely it was dawning on me that I constituted a traffic hazard.

Dammit! Where was that starter button? Oh, yes—wait, what was this, a parade? In my moment of floundering, three other cars had pulled up to the station. Two of them had taken the lane parallel to mine, the third now pulled up squarely in front of me and stopped with its front bumper against mine. Now I was really in a jam, locked between two cars.

"What happened to that damned hitchhiker?" I heard the attendant grunt. But nobody was interested in hitchhikers. Everyone wanted service and they wanted it now. The driver back of me began to yowl that he was first.

"Okay," said the attendant. "Pull up so I can reach you."

The car back of me started to pull up. It jumped a little and stalled.

"What's the matter, no power?" the attendant said, frowning.

"Plenty of power!" the disturbed driver growled. He gunned his motor and we all shot forward. I added my power to the push, and the car ahead of me rolled back into a flower bed, and the driver was screaming, "What the hell!"

Anyway I was out.

I had my troubles getting through the city. Once I had to climb the sidewalk to keep from getting smashed. Once I forgot myself and opened the all-around windshield and signalled for a turn. The cop saw me. That is, he must have seen as much of me as showed at the windshield level—my head and shoulders and an arm.

As far as the cop could tell, that much of me was gliding through the air detached. The cop's mouth fell open. I looked back to see him mop his brow and walk off his beat like a sick man.

But I got through the city without so much as getting ticked by another car, and as soon as that ordeal was over I

parked and had a drink.

I scanned the newspaper, made some telephone calls, ate, and felt better. I set my watch by the clock on the tavern wall, paid my bill, and started to go out the door.

"Just a minute," said the fellow back of the cash register. That phrase just-a-minute was one I never did appreciate. It lacks congeniality. Besides, I was in considerable hurry, having seen the newspaper and made my telephone calls and set my watch.

"I've been watching you," said the tavern man.

"I'm not surprised," I said, "since there happens to be no one else in the room for you to watch."

"I heard a radio report a few minutes ago," he continued, eyeing me like a judge, "that might interest you. Some Venus guys landed up in the mountains this afternoon. The boat cracked up in landing, and a couple of them got killed. But the police have doped it out that there must have been some more of them."

"Surely not," I said. "They wouldn't go off and leave a couple of their brothers dead."

"That's what has got the police mystified, according to the radio. They figure the Venus guys must be hot on the trail of some devilment or they'd have stuck around."

"Well, I wouldn't worry about it," I said. "If they're Venusian criminals, as you imply, at least they won't be able to get far without their ship."

"That's what the radio said," the tavern man agreed, still studying me. "As long as trains and planes and buses keep on the lookout, they can't get out of this corner of the Rockies."

"Sure, they'll be cornered in a day or two. If they're hiding in the mountains, they'll starve out in a week," I said. "Well, so-long."

"JUST a minute," said the tavern fellow. "The two dead ones had on colored silk shirts, they said. And they had bushy yellow hair, the kind Venus guys have."

I planted my hands on my hips and eyed the fellow squarely. "What are you driving at, friend? Just because I happened to be born with yellow hair—"

"You're wearing a silk shirt too—a blue one."

"Of course I am. I always wear silk shirts. What the devil—"

"Can you talk Venus language?" the tavern man asked, tilting his head and stroking his chin.

"Squee-squeekle-squaggle-squam! Does that sound like Venusian to you?"

"Damned if I know. Might be—"

"Oh, I get it!" I said, brightening. "You're simply warning me that with this shirt and hair, I'd better look out not to get crossed up with these birds. Okay."

I started for the door, determined that no just-a-minute would stop me again.

"A bunch of them was in here an hour ago," said the tavern keeper.

I stopped as if I had been shot. He went on talking.

"Yep. Colored silk shirts, yellow hair and all. They ate and drank in a hurry, and beat it. Then the newscast came in on the radio and we knew what they were. But the sons-of-guns, nobody saw which way they went. They're probably out sleeping in someone's haystack."

I sauntered back to the man with a mask of indifference, smiling. "All right, my friend, you've seen them. You've seen me. And yet you try to tell me I'm a Venusian—"

"I never seen them," said the tavern man. "It was my daughter that fed them. She told me. She's gone in to

see the police—"

"All right," I said. "Just content yourself that if they were traveling in a bunch that lets me out. I'm traveling alone."

"They might have left you behind," said the fellow, still stroking his chin. "They left two dead ones behind."

"My friend," I said, slipping a proton gun out of my pocket and polishing it with a handkerchief, "you're running a tavern."

"Yes, sir," said the fellow, turning a little greenish.

"You're here to serve your customers food and drink."

"Yes, sir."

"If you care to build up a thriving business, don't go around accusing your good cash customers of all sorts of rash nonsense. That's no way to build up a thriving business. *Is it?*"

"N-no, sir," the fellow choked, stumbling back against the garbage can.

"How far is it to New York? Around two thousand miles?"

"Around that, sir. It's a good road, sir."

I gave the fellow a final glare from the doorway. "Don't forget my tip, friend. Pull your neck in."

He jerked his neck in so quickly it practically snapped. I went on my way.

**T**WENTY-FIVE miles down the road I saw something ahead of me. Some cars and some men. They were barricading the road.

It was nearly dark, and I had been on the point of turning on my lights. I thought better of it.

I parked on the shoulder until a car came along from my rear. When it got to the barricade the men stopped it and all gathered around to take a look. While they searched under cushions for hidden Venusians, I cut

around them.

I heard a screech of surprise from one of the state police as I went around. I looked back. My rear wheel had evidently hit a mud puddle and thrown a spray of water on the fellow. He whirled as if he wanted to shoot someone. But he didn't see anybody. The last glimpse I had of the group, they were pondering over some tracks along the shoulder. Already they were miles behind me.

At last I dared turn on my lights, and traveling was much simpler. The other cars gave me plenty of berth. Now and then I had to run another barricade, and I knew the tavern proprietor had put in a good word for me to the police.

I wondered if he believed I was heading for New York. I had mentioned New York to throw him off the track. I supposed he would jump to the conclusion that I was heading for San Francisco. But maybe he was smarter than I had given him credit for. I sped on toward New York.

All along I continued to wonder what progress the other invisible cars were making. The last I had seen of them, you remember, was when they first slid away from the smash-up ahead of me. I had seen the men leap into action on the instant, start the cars rolling, pull their all-around windshields closed (which caused them to become invisible) and that was all.

I was caught between two constant worries—that I might run into them, and that I might not. I assumed that they were keeping in formation so as not to smash each other up. I knew they didn't dare use radios, for fear of giving themselves away. How in blazes was I going to fall into the invisible parade without smashing some more telltale spots into view?

The only answer I could come to was

to keep heading toward New York—toward the Spaceport Suburb. I had seen a newspaper back at the tavern and had checked my deadline. I had until tomorrow noon. Well, with any kind of luck, I could make it—easy.

My lights caught sight of a hitchhiker up the road. I stopped, backed up, and took him in. He was about four-thirds drunk. And thirsty. Very thirsty.

I kept the windshield open and gradually the fresh air began to have an effect on him. He showed signs of becoming talkative. I wanted some information on a few general topics and I began to quiz him.

HE did pretty well on the weather.

He gave me a fair round on unimportant politics. But when I brought the conversation around to matters of specific fact, he was no help at all.

"Didn't you even know that America was shipping ten billion in gold to Mars tomorrow?" I said.

"Never heard of it," he answered. "What's your favorite drink?"

"Have you ever been to the Spaceport Suburb outside New York?" I said. "Have you ever seen any maps of it—or pictures? Can't you tell me something about how it's laid out?"

He shrugged. "That's outa my line. Which you like better, Martian wine or Jupiter gin? Me—I'll take Jupiter gin."

We stopped at the edge of a one-horse town. Jupiter-gin had sobered down enough that I trusted him with an errand. Late as it was, one general store was still open. I gave Jupiter-gin some good American bills and in a moment he came back with the goods: a white broadcloth shirt, a pair of scissors, and a sheet to throw around my neck while he cut my hair; and a stock of bottled goods.

I drove and he cut.

He could hardly wait till I gave him the go-ahead on the bottled goods. But I was firm with him. Not until he had sheared by head thoroughly did I relax my disciplinary measures.

Then I slowed up almost to a stop, rolled out on the soft shoulder, and carefully dropped the sheet full of bottled goods. My hitchhiker was out with a bound. I left him there in the darkness. I calculated that there were enough spiritual blessings to keep him soused for ten days.

I put my foot down on the throttle and held it there. The hours from midnight to dawn went by in no time.

I had to backtrack ten miles or so to pick up the two boys with the air rifles. They were the first persons I saw by the dawn's early light, and it took me ten miles to realize that they were just the company I needed. Old Jupiter-gin hadn't known a thing about space travel, but these two twelve-year-olds would know everything.

Before picking them up I changed to my white broadcloth shirt and took pains to brush all the scraps of hair out of the car. Then I rolled up to within a few feet of them, parked, got out, and started hiking along with them.

"Want a ride, boys?"

"Where's your car?"

"Back there by the road. You can't see it very well from here. Come on. I'll take you for a ride."

The freckled-faced boy gave me the suspicious eye. I don't think he liked my hair cut.

"Where you going?" he asked.

"To New York—to the Spaceport Suburb," I said, "to watch a big ship take off."

The boys' eyes grew big. Freckles was cautious, but Shorty was eager from the word go. It was only a five minutes' job to talk them into it. Right

away the three of us were shooting silently down the road. The boys were so thrilled over the magic carpet effect of the invisible car that all their words were gasps. We slipped over most of two states before I got them calmed down.

BY that time we had run through some rain and got the car pretty badly spattered with mud, and everyone we passed craned at us. No doubt they wondered what sort of apparition we were. We stopped off the road by a pond and got a view of our car from the outside—and no wonder people craned. It looked as if a lot of mud had frozen against the sides of a car and the car had driven away from it, leaving the splatterings of mud hanging in mid-air.

We gave the car a swift thorough washjob. The sun had come out to stay and we had run out of the rain belt, so we washed the thing back to invisibility and went on our way.

"When we get to New York, boys," I said, "we'll see one of the biggest freighters that ever hippity-hopped among the planets."

"It's got a capacity of twelve thousand tons," said Freckles.

"And a cruising range equal to the orbit of Neptune," said Shorty.

"Say, you boys are okay," I said. "You probably know all about this trip it's going to make."

"Sure, we've read all about it," said Freckles.

"Do you think," I asked, "that there'll be many people down to watch it take off?"

"Gosh, didn't you know, they're having a big celebration at noon today! There'll probably be thousands of people on hand to watch them load in the gold."

"Gold?" I asked innocently.

"Gee, mister, you don't know nothing, do you?" said Shorty.

"Ten billions," said Freckles. "The newspapers have been full of it. It's the gold that America is sending to Mars to pay for the land she took up there. Everybody knows that."

"Well, well," I said. "Well, well, well."

We drove along in silence for awhile, and I felt that the boys were studying me with curiosity. I changed the subject.

"Say, fellows, wouldn't that gold be a nice little dish for bandits?"

The boys laughed at this. It struck them as funny that any bandits should be so foolhardy as to think that they could get away with a heavily guarded job like this.

Then we stopped at the edge of a city and picked up a newspaper and an outrageously large supply of shot for the boys' air rifles. Again we sheltered ourselves within our walls of invisibility and traveled on.

THE story was in the paper, all right.

The boys discovered it, and they reread it to me three or four times, and I'll admit the chills raced through me wildly. I had bought the paper to make certain the story wasn't there—but evidently old Jupiter-gin had found someone to talk to before he knocked himself out with drink.

"Although partially intoxicated," the story read, "he was able to give a logical account of the facts. He was certain that the man who picked him up wore a blue silk shirt and had an abundance of yellow hair of the sort that is called 'Venusian.' The man had him buy a shirt and forced him to administer a thorough hair cut to the yellow locks. In proof of the latter, scraps of the hair were still clinging to the sheet which the narrator had in his

possession. The obvious conclusion is that one of the Venusians, wanted by the police on suspicion of a malicious plot, has escaped the trap of the Rocky Mountain state police and is heading eastward."

I glanced at the boys and saw the look of frightened desperation in their faces. They whispered to each other. Then Freckles spoke up.

"Mister, you can let us out right here."

"Oh, no," I said. "I promised to take you to the Spaceport Suburb and get you back home again. I'm a man of my word."

"Right here," said Shorty, "will be okay."

"Now don't go and get jittery," I said. "You boys haven't anything to be afraid of. What's the matter? Scared of a little adventure?"

"We're not scared," said Shorty, "but we don't want to get into a jam with the police."

"We don't want to spend our lives in jail," Freckles said, and every freckle was standing out on his white face.

"Listen, men," I said. "Let *me* worry about that end of it—" and then and there I took them into my confidence. I had to make a pretty big story of it so that they would understand; and by the time I got through we were almost at our destination.

We were a pretty tense trio. The last two states we had crossed had been alive with highway patrols. We had to do some tall dodging and squirming to get through.

"So there you've got it," I concluded my story, and I knew my eyes were blazing from the way those two boys watched me. "Keep your mouths shut and do exactly as I told you. Don't tell anybody anything. I don't want to see you trip up and get in trouble. This

thing has got to go through like clock-work. Do you get me?"

"But what if you get killed?" Freckles protested.

"That makes no difference," I said. But his question made a noticeable difference in the pit of my stomach. And Shorty's comment didn't help.

"You probably will get killed," Shorty said, his eyes shining dangerously. "Anyway, it begins to look like it to me."

**Y**ES, and to me. The nearer we got to the great metropolitan spaceport the more ominous signs of trouble we saw. State police were stationed at frequent intervals. Motorcycle cops were on the alert at every crossroads village. Nothing but an invisible car could have slid through the way we did.

And we held our breath, you can bet, every time we shot past a bunch of them wide open.

But it was plain as day that those cops weren't out to stop anything invisible. Maybe they were combing the highways on the suspicion that the mysterious Venusian gang was heading for the gold-ship take-off. Maybe they were simply guarding the spaceport region on general principles, stopping everyone that looked suspicious.

Anyway, none of the highway patrols had taken the trouble to string any ropes across the roads; so it was a cinch that they didn't know there was an invisible motorcade on the way. *Zang!* What a chance that old Jupiter-gin had been too stewed to know he had ridden in an invisible car! He'd have spilled the beans sure!

*Zang!* All three of us gasped at once. Shooting over the crest of a hill we saw it before us—the Spaceport Suburb. And was it alive! It was teeming with cars and people and col-

ored banners like an interplanetary holiday.

Two big objects loomed up across that vast stretch of green plain to the left of the village. The biggest one was the freighter—the hugest space ship I had ever seen. It looked like a colossal streamlined lizard all set to leap into the skies.

The smaller blotch on the landscape was the stadium. It was sizeable enough, as stadiums go; but the space ship dwarfed it.

It was a U-shaped stadium with its open side toward the poised ship; and what a crowd it held! The ceremony must already be on, full blast.

"How come they've started so early?" I muttered. I had hoped to have time to spare.

"We're in the Eastern time belt, you know," said Freckles.

*Zang!* I had forgot all about that cussed change in time. My watch was loafing along two hours behind schedule. It must be high noon—fifteen after, to be precise.

"*Zang!*" I blurted. "That boat might charge off before we get there! Check over your rifles, fellows."

I opened an end of the all-around windshield and they each fired a few shots. Clever little guns, those thirtieth century air rifles. Pneumatic B-B guns, you might call them. They were nothing but high-powered toys, but they carried an automatic mechanism that fired two hundred B-B's per minute.

We cut around the village and headed straight for the stadium. There were lots of people to dodge, but most of the crowd was packed in the stadium. Surrounding the grounds were little clumps of uniformed guards stationed at twenty-yard intervals. Nothing visible was getting by them. We squeezed through and moved straight

for the open U of the stadium. From then on I practically ceased to breath.

Plainly no Venusians had invaded the ship as yet. Guards stood in its big open doorway.

One bit of luck was with us. The take-off was a free public ceremony. The ushers hadn't bothered to shut up the peep-holes at the base of the stadium.

"There's your spot, boys!" I said. "Slip under the stadium and nab one of those little open windows. If you can find any old boxes, build a little screen around yourselves to make sure no one sees you. Then go to work. Have you got it?"

"We've got it!"

"Good-by, boys."

"Good-by."

**A** GAIN I was alone in the invisible car. I was taking what would probably be my next-to-last ride, in the presence of several thousand people—and *none of them saw me*. I wondered, morbidly, if anyone would bother to see me when I took that last ride. Or do the Earth funeral cars have windows? Well, all of that would be the least of my worries within a few minutes.

The close-cropped grass of the stadium floor was in my favor. I watched it press under the front wheels as I rolled along. The action was scarcely noticeable. Still, I realized, anything will be noticed sooner or later if there are several thousand eyes looking on. Even those little postage-stamp spots on my front and rear bumpers. Terror shot through me.

My eyes swept the scene apprehensively. The big speech of the occasion was evidently on. From a small platform planted in the center of the stadium, the orator shouted vigorous patriotic platitudes into the micro-

phone. From time to time the stadium came back at him with a thundering cheer.

Now and then he turned to his fellow dignitaries on the little platform to heap his praise upon them. Occasionally he would make a sweeping gesture toward the mammoth ship.

But his most thrilling gestures were the ones he made toward the three big armored trucks parked squarely in front of his speaker's platform. You can't stand up and toss gestures at ten billion dollars without stirring up a little excitement. My blood pounded so fast I was afraid I would jolt the steering wheel into visibility.

Well, there it was—the crowd, the gold, the speaker and his pals, and the wide open spaces beyond the open U of the stadium where a big runway, wide enough for the trucks to drive up, had been built right up to the vast yawning freight door of the space ship. In that open door stood the starchy crew of the boat.

There, I repeat was the picture. But I didn't forget that that was simply the *visible* picture. If the invisible could have been seen, how much more would there have been to the picture?

Me, at least. And maybe others? I wasted no time trying to answer that question. I drove around. I circled the platform and the gold trucks a dozen times. I cruised in and out of the open spaces. If the speech lasted long enough, I was going to bump my way through every square foot of space that might contain other invisible cars.

My search was brought to a sudden halt by a roar of applause that indicated the end of the speech. Someone else made an announcement and the affair turned into a pageant. Down the runway from the freighter the starchy uniformed men came marching. In a few minutes they were to parade back

to the ship with the gold trucks.

I held my breath. I saw little tufts of grass jumping from near the foot of the inclined runway. Some police noticed it too, and they started over in that direction. Then it stopped, and so did the police.

**T**HE dignified march came down the incline steadily and with great dignity, and I knew from the announcement that these officers, guards and crew were picked men who were being assigned the great honor of transporting the gold to Mars. There were not more than forty of them.

Not so many, in other words, but what ten or twelve skillful interplanetary bandits might handle them if they worked it right. Working it right consisted of getting into that space ship this instant—by means of invisible cars.

A split second after the parade trailed away from the inclined runway on its march toward the speaker's platform, I shot ahead. I zipped onto that runway like an invisible torpedo. Up to the ship I sped.

I cut through the open door with the feeling that I was being swallowed up by some great monster with a stomach as big as an auditorium. This was the big open freight room, nearly half full of cargo. Bandits could make good use of that, too. I flashed on my lights, gripped the wheel, and shot back and forth across the big room.\*

In ten seconds I must have cut across the room ten times. Every instant I expected to be blown to bits by

some guards left concealed in some of the dark corners. Constantly I expected to bump into some invisible obstacles.

All right, they weren't there! That precaution was taken. If they didn't come within the next few minutes, their chance was gone.

I cut off my lights. My invisible car spun around and leaped out through the big open door. Down the inclined runway I chased—

There it comes! And fast! Car number one of the invisible motorcade! Yes, I *saw* it! I saw the curved all-around windshield melt into visibility before my eyes. I glimpsed the Venustian faces, the bushy yellow hair—

And all in a split second. They were charging up the incline, I was shooting down it. The spray of B-B's turned their windshield visible just in time to give me my cue.

I bore down on the throttle. We crashed head on.

**I** AWOKE in a state of terrific pain.

I was lying in a bed. I tried to turn over, but my body seemed to be burdened down with mortar. I was a mass of casts and bandages. I supposed I was dying. In fact, I thought the doctor was trying to be funny when he spoke up so brightly to the group of people who came in to talk with him.

"Oh, sure," the doctor said. "This fellow's going to pull out of it all right. A few breaks and cuts. Nothing serious."

"Good," said a stern voice. "We've got a cell for him as soon as you get through with him. I'll miss my guess if the whole bunch of them don't get death by gas for this."

I twisted my head and forced an eye open. The view was blurry at best, but I could see the crowd was largely officers. Then I heard some piping voices

\* Lights such as could be used on a car of this kind, completely invisible in itself, might have to be worked on an entirely different principle. Invisible rays of ultra-violet or infra-red could be used, and by use of a pair of spectacles which would translate the vibrations into a range visible to the naked eye, would mean complete vision in the dark by the driver while others would be unaware of any illumination.—Ed.

that were familiar—the voices of Freckles and Shorty.

"You've got him all wrong!" Shorty squawked.

"What are these boys yelping about?" one of the officers demanded.

"They're trying to make out that the fellow's innocent," another officer answered. "They claimed they had a wild ride with him—"

"He's guilty, no question about that," put in a third officer. "We admit he was smart enough to get his hair cut and change his shirt, but he's a Venusian, there's no getting around that. Maybe he talks good English—the six we've got locked up can do that too. And probably the four dead ones could, too."

"The boys admitted that this guy used the by-word *zang!*" the second officer said, with an air of pride. "And I happen to know that that's Venusian for *wow!*"

"Hold on! Hold on!" said the first officer. He turned to the two boys. "How'd you happen to be shooting those air rifles at the runway?"

"Because he told us to," said Freckles, jerking a thumb at me. "He said that sooner or later the bandits would try to drive up that incline in invisible cars, but if we would pepper them with shots they'd turn visible."

"Now we're getting somewhere—"

"And he said that he guessed it was up to him to stop them by crashing into them, because you police weren't on your jobs," Shorty added.

"What's this?" The officers turned to me, and if I hadn't been defenseless I think they would have bit me. I mumbled my explanation.

I explained that I had phoned through to the Spaceport Police to warn them. Then I had driven through to make certain that they had left no loopholes that the invisible motorcade

could get through. And all I had found was loopholes.

"The nearer the boys and I got to the Suburb," I said, "the more I became convinced that my warning hadn't been taken seriously—"

The senior officer went white with rage. "Who the devil took that telephone call? Which of you? Speak up?"

"Don't get sore," said the second officer. "After all, that call came from a city with a nut house. The inmates are always getting away and pulling tricks. When this voice on the wire told me the cars were invisible, I figured—well—"

"The whole bunch of us," said another officer, "figured the same. We thought it was a red-hot gag."

"Gag!" the senior officer roared. "Stupid fools! You thought it was a red-hot gag! And so this fellow—whoever he is—risked his life—"

"He's a Venusian secret service man," said the doctor. "I found the credentials on him. From the things he's been saying in his delirium, I assume that he was a stowaway on the space ship of the Venusian bandits."

I nodded. There hadn't been time to get word through to the Earth of the danger. In fact, I had barely caught the boat after a last-minute tip.

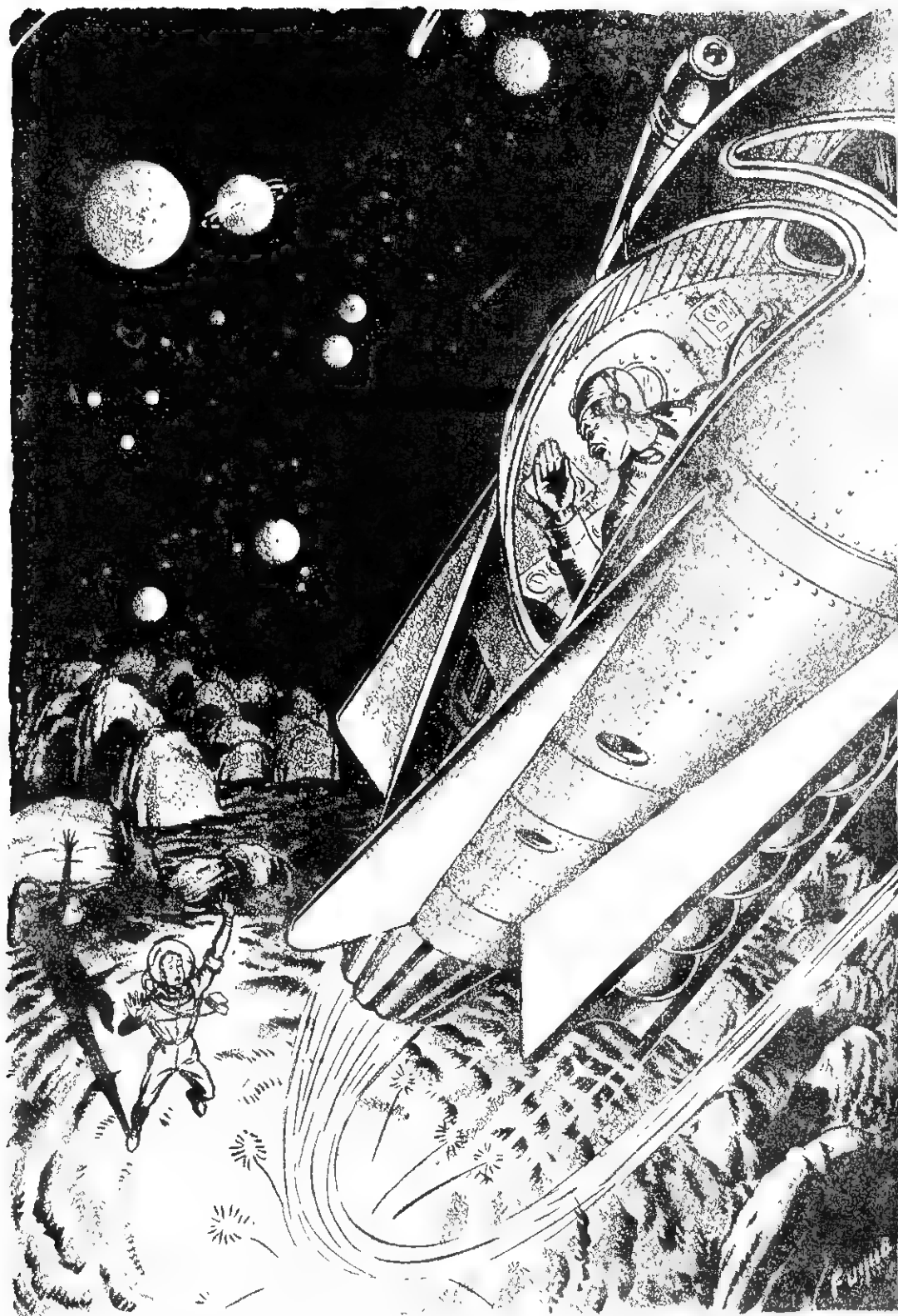
"Did the freighter get off?" I inquired.

"On schedule," said the senior officer, "with three truckloads of gold."

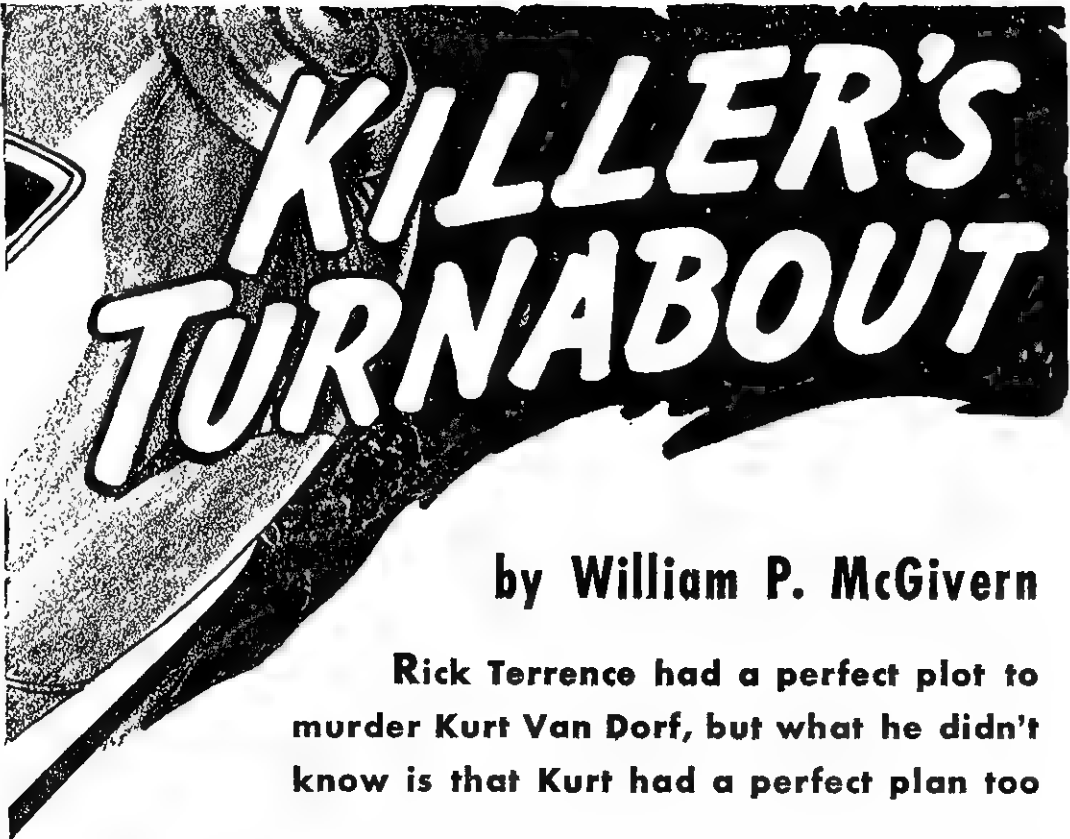
"If you don't mind," I murmured, "I'd like to have one of those invisible cars for a souvenir. I've sort of taken a liking to invisible driving."

"Sorry," said the officer, "but the whole motorcade smashed up and turned into the most visible pile of junk you ever saw."

"*Zang!*" I said. Which, as one of the erudite officers had observed, is the Venusian word for *wow!*



With a flare of rockets, the ship zoomed out into space



# KILLER'S TURNABOUT

by William P. McGivern

**Rick Terrence had a perfect plot to murder Kurt Van Dorf, but what he didn't know is that Kurt had a perfect plan too**

**R**ICK TERRENCE climbed into his heavy lead *metalfibre* space suit and pulled long flexible metallic gloves over his already covered hands. He lifted a heavy lead helmet from an open locker built into the wall of the tiny space ship; but before clamping it over his head he turned to the other occupant of the ship a curious smile playing over his heavy, dark features.

"It isn't necessary for me to remind you, my dear Kurt," he said smoothly, "that we're in this together. We both have blood on our hands and if we don't hang together we'll certainly hang separately." His faint smile widened displaying chalk white teeth and outlining his jugged jaw more clearly. "Which is my little way," he went on, "of informing you that I won't stand for any funny business. Not that I don't trust you and all that but I think

we should understand each other."

Kurt Van Dorf's lean face remained impassive but his eyes were watchful and wary. "I understand you," he said slowly, "you're not the most subtle person in the world, y'know."

"Fine," Rick smiled, "I just wanted to be sure you did." He waved his heavily gloved hand in mock salute. "Toodle oo, old chap; back in ten minutes." Clamping the space-oxygen helmet over his head he opened the door of the ship and stepped into the air chamber. A minute or so later Kurt heard the outer air chamber door close with a muffled bang.

Moving swiftly, Kurt crossed to a heavily lead-glass glazed window and peered after his partner's heavy figure until he saw it disappear into one of the shallow craters that dimpled the ragged surface of the tiny asteroid.

Then he looked at his watch. Ten

minutes to work. A cruel gloating smile touched his lips. More than enough time for the job he had in mind. What was it Rick had said? They both had blood on their hands; that was it. In a few more minutes, Kurt thought with grim amusement, he'd have more blood on his hands. The blood of his partner and associate in crime, Rick Terrence, to be exact.

Turning from the window he crossed to a work bench, reached under it and drew forth a small slender cylinder. It looked harmless enough, he thought cynically, but it was filled with a deadly poison gas, odorless and colorless. It was part of the careful, deliberate scheme he had worked out weeks ago. It paid to be careful when there were millions of dollars in the balance.

He and Rick had been laboratory assistants to the old, internationally renowned chemist and physicist, Percy Berkshire. They discovered one day in clearing out some of his files that he had figured out the exact location of an asteroid abounding in free radium. For a moment they had stared silently at the papers and then Rick had looked up and smiled. His curious, mirthless smile.

"Good deal of money—and power—here," he'd said casually.

Kurt had nodded, his brain working swiftly. There was money and power in this knowledge. Money and power he intended to be his alone.

"The old man." Rick's voice had been almost lazy, "would never stand for exploitation. He probably intends to give these figures and data to the Government."

"Be a pity," he'd observed casually, "if anything happened to dear Professor Berkshire, wouldn't it?"

From that moment on they had plotted the old scientist's death. In the end it had been ridiculously easy. They

both knew of his weak heart and one day in the laboratory Kurt had lured him close to an open conduit on a generator and Rick had "accidentally" stumbled into him, knocking his frail old figure across the live wire.

The coronor's report had read: "Heart attack resulting from accidental electrocution."

FOR a week or so Rick and he had separated until the slight furor caused by the scientist's death had subsided and then they got together and made their plans for the trip to the isolated asteroid of radium.

When they reached it they discovered that the old scientist had been right. If anything, he had been too conservative in his estimate of the amount of free radium existing there.

Radium—by the ton. Its value was beyond computation. They had loaded their lead storage compartments with pound after pound of pure radium and this was just the start. More trips would follow but, Kurt thought exultantly, Rick would not be along. Rick was going to die, swiftly, painlessly, silently, never knowing what had happened to him. And the money and power represented by the radium asteroid would belong solely to Kurt Van Dorf.

He was close now to the realization of his dream. So close that his heart hammered painfully with anticipation and his tongue was raw and dry in his mouth.

He crossed to a divan built against the wall and tucked the cylinder of poison gas beneath one of the leather pillows. He sat down next to it, his breath coming fast. Only one more step and his plan would be complete. He waited for several minutes, calming his jumpy nerves, and then he heard the outer door of the air lock open.

In a few more seconds the ship door swung inward and Rick's awkward, helmeted figure moved into the ship.

Kurt watched him closely as he stripped off his gloves, removed his helmet and space suit. If he suspected anything—

"Well," he asked casually, "did you find anything changed?"

Rick hung up his space suit before replying, "I don't know." He was frowning. "I came across some bare stretches about fifty yards from the ship that I don't think we noticed before. It may be that the radium is only an outer crust surrounding an ordinary silica core. I think you'd better take a look-see at them."

It was the opportunity for which Kurt had been waiting.

"I'll take a look," he said, "right away." His hand slipped under the pillow, twisted the valve on the cylinder, until he could feel the gas escaping against his finger. He stood up then, crossed to the locker and brought forth his space suit. It would take several minutes for the gas to fill the ship but he wasn't taking any chances. He was getting out as soon as he could. He knew how swift and deadly the gas was. One or two deep breaths was about all a man could stand.

He climbed hurriedly into his space suit, pulled on his metal gloves and moved to the door. He saw that Rick was in the observation room bending over a chart, his fingers tracing one of the dotted space routes. Kurt smiled cynically. The poor fool was planning a trip he'd never make. In just about two more minutes the gas would be biting into his lungs, destroying Rick Terrence forever.

"So long," he called, careful to hold his breath. To himself he laughed: "Forever, you chump."

Rick turned from the charts and

waved a hand. "Good bye," he smiled. "I'll be seeing you."

He continued to smile as Kurt stepped through the door but when the outer air lock door slammed, his expression faded to one of cynical contempt. "I'll be seeing you," he repeated savagely, "but it'll be in hell."

HE wheeled then to the chart, made a calculation, set two gauges, and then shoved a throttle bar forward.

"So long," he shouted exultantly over the hum of the rocket exhausts. "I'll be back for you Kurt Van Dorf—in six months." He reached for the contact lever then, and for the first time noticed that his hand was trembling. He clenched his fist tightly and then he became aware of the peculiar lightness in his head and the sudden weakness in his knees.

He sagged against the control board and laughed as he thought of Kurt.

"Damn you," he screamed, "You're all alone, d'you understand? All alone because I'm leaving you all alone to die. All alone with a million tons of radium. My radium d'you hear? All mine, all mine."

He pulled himself erect, a giddy, sickening laugh bubbling in his throat. Everything was so funny—and black.

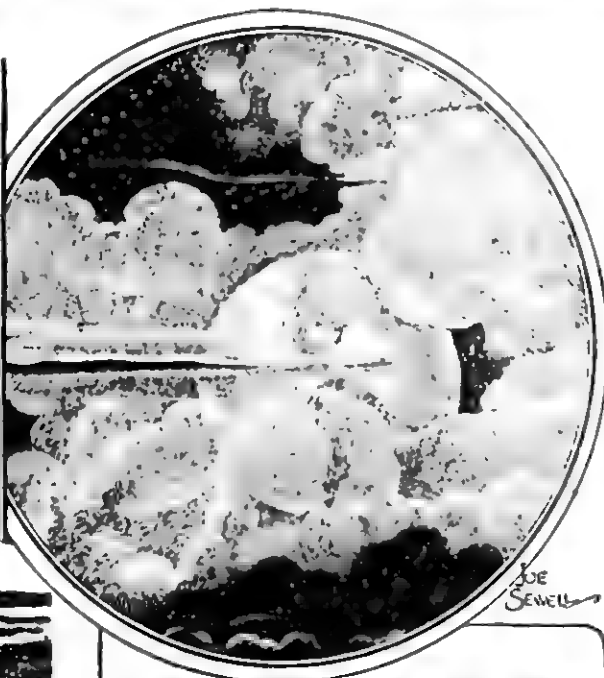
He fumbled blindly for the contact lever. He had to get away. Had to get away right now. His fingers closed on the lever and with his last remaining strength he shoved it into position.

The ship shuddered violently as energy contact was made and Rick stumbled against the chart board. He teetered blindly for an instant and then he crashed to the floor, a rushing wave of blackness enveloping him.

The next instant the space ship took off with a hissing roar and seconds later it disappeared into the void, an arcing shower of sparks trailing its wake.

# Scientific

**E**ARTH'S ATMOSPHERE IS APPROXIMATELY 625 MILES IN THICKNESS, SCIENCE SAYS. BUT ARE THEY WRONG? DOES IT EXTEND INCALCULABLY FURTHER, IN RAREFIED FORM?



**N**EWEST MYSTERY OF THE ATMOSPHERE IS THE HITHERTO UNSEEN "SKY WRITING" LEFT IN THE WAKE OF HIGH-FLYING PLANES. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



**ERNEST SHACKLETON**, ARCTIC EXPLORER, WAS SAVED FROM DEATH BY A WEIRD VISION OF HIS SUPPLY DEPOT, WHILE LOST. WHAT CAUSES THESE "FAR-SIGHT" VISIONS?

# Mysteries

## EARTH'S AMAZING ATMOSPHERE

By JOSEPH J. MILLARD

**In recent months strange new mysteries of the atmosphere have been observed. What mysterious force is behind them?**

**O**F all the mysteries that intrigue and baffle scientists, none are more completely puzzling and often contradictory than those concerned with earth's blanket of atmosphere. At the same time, none strike closer to our everyday lives than those phases of the mystery that go to make up our daily weather. We know a great deal about earth's atmosphere today—but the mass of what we don't know, as yet, looms gigantic by comparison.

We still don't know, for example, how high the atmosphere stretches above our heads. We have accurately measured some six hundred and twenty-five miles of it but the indications are that air extends on up, growing thinner and thinner, to uncalculated heights. But at least we know the weight of this air blanket, which presses down on the average human body with a force of nearly fifteen tons. We know, through scientific research, a number of effects of that tremendous weight but by no means all of them.

Science knows, for example, that air weight or pressure is responsible in a large measure for storms. It knows that the pull of the moon causes tides in the air as well as in the water.

But science doesn't know, for certain, why devastating earthquakes and destructive storms so frequently occur together. Sudden changes in air pressure may cause shiftings within the earth, just as they cause tidal waves on the ocean but much of that theory remains to be proven. There are, however, a large number of wells scattered over the earth that accurately forecast storms by shooting up columns of water or mud or by emitting a whistling groan when air pressure changes abruptly.

One of the big mysteries of our atmosphere facing meteorologists today is why the earth is getting hotter.

For years, country people have shaken their heads and affirmed that winters were milder and summers hotter than they used to be. Nobody paid much attention—until a few obscure laboratories engaged in weather research announced

startling evidence to prove that assumption. Whether this is a temporary change or one that may go on and on until the earth shrivels and dies under terrific furnace heat, no one dares guess.

In the arctic, science found its greatest evidence of this growing heat wave. The area of frozen soil in Siberia has, in the past hundred years, retreated northward an average of twenty miles along all edges. At the same time, polar ice caps have grown smaller and the ice over the arctic ocean is measurably thinner. But even in the tropic zones, records show that moisture is decreasing under a slowly rising average of heat. What the eventual result will be, no one knows.

Nor can any scientist say, for certain, what is causing the marked rise in atmospheric heat and dryness. No traces of increased radioactivity have been discovered, nor have there been any increase in the number of active volcanoes throwing interior heat out into the air. One theory being studied with special interest concerns the ozone layer in the upper atmosphere.

This layer of ionized gas is small but vital to the continued existence of life on earth. Without it, the ultraviolet rays of the sun would fall, unfiltered, on earth and quickly wipe out life. But ozone has the added property of forming a heat-holding blanket over the earth. According to recent discoveries, some mysterious ray or electromagnetic activity over earth's poles is releasing greater supplies of ozone which are drifting toward the equator, forming an insulating blanket.

Why there should be an increase in ozone formation, no scientist knows. However, they are unanimous in affirming that the theory blaming this activity on the increase of radio broadcasting is without foundation. We must, they assert, look deeper for a cause of such startling changes.

**B**UT there are many more unsolved mysteries of the air. One that has appeared only within the past few years concerns the odd trails frequently left in the air by the passage of airplanes.

No acceptable reason has yet been advanced but the problem has suddenly taken on a new and vital importance.

British and Nazi bombers by the score have been lost because, despite all efforts at camouflage or stealth, their approach has been betrayed by long trails of smoky gray vapor that appears behind each plane at the most disconcerting times. No one knows exactly what causes this undesirable "skywriting" effect nor how to prevent it but the best scientists of the warring nations are working night and day on the problem.

Another mystery that intrigues science is that dealing with unbelievable light effects caused by water vapor or ice crystals in the atmosphere. That is, meteorologists are quite positive that crystals and vapors are the cause, but exactly how some of the fantastic phenomena are caused is still much a mystery.

During the First World War, thousands of soldiers saw a phenomenon that almost defied description. During the night of November 6, 1916, it appeared that all the flashes of gunfire were reflected in vertical streaks in the air, centering about ten or fifteen degrees above the horizon. For a time this gave the appearance of hundreds of sharp-bladed daggers of fire being stabbed upward into the sky.

Shortly afterward, following an explosion, a great streak of what looked like red smoke shot skyward and moved slowly across the sky. This streak had a dark center and as it moved, ripples of what looked like black waves washed up over it. Although science can fairly accurately blame crystals in the air for such effects just how the job is done is still a mystery.

A minor mystery is concerned with the formation of snow flakes in the air, although this problem really devolves into a different field of science. To date, microphotographs have been made of over sixteen thousand different snowflakes without finding any two of the exquisite designs alike. Why this endless variation should exist is a puzzle.

One of the most fearful manifestations of our blanket of air is that of the tornado or cyclone. The weird feats performed by the terrible, revolving funnel that sweeps across the countryside are too numerous to list. It is generally believed that cyclones cannot or will not strike the largest cities and it is true that they seldom do. But in 1928, a tornado crossed the heart of London doing \$75,000 worth of damage.

SCIENCE has made some progress toward determining the effect of atmospheric conditions on plants and animals. After denying the belief for years, science now accepts the fact that a throbbing wound or aching limb can accurately prophesy weather changes. There are numerous plants that forecast weather by their actions and many animals are sensitive to atmospheric changes long before they are noticed by man.

An unsolved mystery still being ardently studied is the one dealing with weather cycles. For hundreds of years, mankind has noted a tendency for particular kinds of weather to recur every so many years. Time after time these cycles have been plotted by scientists who believe they have at last found an accurate guide to weather.

Then, for no known reason, the cycles break down and an entirely new one starts. For example, for fifteen years after 1868, every fifth year in England was considerably wetter than the preceding four. This seemed well on the way to becoming a cycle. Then, for no known reason, the period changed. From 1889 until 1909, every third year was wet. Then, until 1922, every second year showed the moisture increase. Whether these are coincidences or real cycles that break down under the effects of some force we know nothing about still remains to be settled.

A puzzle to meteorologists is why the air sometimes allows unbelievable feats of long-range vision. At odd and unpredictable times, people are able to see far beyond the range of normal sight through some unknown property of atmosphere.

For example, the French coast, 45 miles from the British port of Hastings can only be seen as a faint hazy line on even the clearest of days. But during the evening of July 26, 1797, the coast of Picardy was seen with such incredible sharpness that persons in Hastings could see the colors of the houses in town and the identification of small fishing boats at anchor in the bay.

Another such an amazing phenomena saved the life of the arctic explorer, Ernest Shackleton, by giving him a single sharp glimpse of his supply depot whose location had been lost and which was located far beyond the range of normal vision.

IT is, however, no wonder that we know so little about our own blanket of atmosphere. Although we have measured it up to more than six hundred miles, man has actually penetrated only thirteen miles and that on only one short occasion. What we have learned from even that brief excursion, has served to give meteorologists new headaches.

For one thing, the old theory of increasing cold as higher altitudes are obtained, has been broken down. There seem to be layers of cold and warmth and finally, high in the stratosphere, an amazing rise in temperature to quite livable heat. But no scientist has yet offered a solution for the absolutely unvarying temperature maintained through a large portion of the stratosphere.

Also, scientists have found not only strong cyclonic winds in the stratosphere but also weird clouds where no normal clouds should exist. Now it is believed that the stratosphere is topped by a warm layer some thirty miles in thickness which serves as a sound-reflecting insulating blanket over the earth. Above that is the Kenelly-Heaviside Layer, that queer stratum that reflects radio waves

back to earth and makes much of our long-range broadcasting possible. Just recently, however, evidence has come to light to indicate that some radio waves slip through this layer and are stopped by another reflecting layer, some ninety miles higher.

Very recent experiments have indicated that this second conducting layer is really two layers, some forty miles apart, in which the temperature is thought to reach as high as sixteen hundred degrees Fahrenheit.

For a time, the study of the upper atmosphere set the field of science in an uproar by apparently revealing the presence of an entirely new element in the upper air. This element, characterized by a bright green band in the spectrum, caused much speculation. Today it is generally thought to be

caused by oxygen which exists not in the form of molecules, as it does on earth, but in the form of single atoms. This, however, is little more than a guess.

There are countless other mysteries of our atmospheric blanket that remain unsolved. In fact, each one that is finally solved seems to bring up a train of new puzzles still more intriguing.

But during the past few years, science has become increasingly aware that everything on earth, including humanity itself depends upon unsolved mysteries of the atmosphere for all that it is and does. How much of this amazing control is caused by activities in the upper air itself and how much comes to us through the upper air from outer space, still remains a mystery.

THE END

## THE OBSERVATORY

(Concluded from page 47)

**E**VEN your best friend won't tell you, but everybody hates "B. O." Especially is this true in the chemical laboratory—if the chemist has a sense of humor. A concentration of butyric acid, as small as six parts in 100 billion, will play havoc with anybody's nose, because butyric acid is a common constituent of "B. O."

**L**IBYA, where the Italians have found exceedingly tough going against the motorized British, is hot in more than one respect. At Azizia, Libya, the highest one-day temperature ever recorded was a *heatkrieg* of 136 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade! Our own Death Valley, Calif. still holds the record for high consistent heat average—102 degrees for the whole month of July.

**I**F you have 20/20 vision, look up into the sky some night and you will be able to see the brightest known star visible to the naked eye—Upsilon Sagittarii, of the fourth magnitude. Upsilon Sagittarii has 45,000 to 70,000 times the sun's light, and its estimated distance from Earth is 9000 light-years. Upsilon may have about 70 times the sun's diameter and a surface temperature near 10,500 degrees.

**T**HOSE Nazis think of everything. Their latest twist is an emerald-green dye which Goering's aviators carry in their life-belts. If they're forced down at sea, the water is stained for yards around by a patch remarkably visible from the air.

**A**DAM LINK, put up your metal dukes. You've got a rival! He's probably the first practical robot invented. Henry is a black steel box with flashing bulbs, gears and photo-electric cells inside. Henry tells the time to phone callers. When he is dialed, a film containing the recording of each hour and minute begins to function. A bell rings,

and Henry says: "The correct time is such-and-such A. M."

**T**HE newest angle to artificial transfusion is powdered blood plasma. In the older system, red-blood cells were separated from the blood (by a centrifugal process) and an agent added to prevent clotting. The liquid plasma was then stored in blood banks. In the new process, the plasma is powdered. Mixed with water, it is quickly available again for transfusion. Like the original system, no blood typing is necessary. Experiments are now under way to make powdered plasma foolproof.

**U**NGAINLY and unsightly gas storage tanks need no longer clutter up the skyline, a menace to aviation. Natural gas can now be liquefied for storage. First ammonia steps the temperature down to 27 degrees below zero, F.; then ethylene to -150 degrees F. There are two additional steps, both secret. To reverse the process and make this water-colored liquid available to consumers, steam is applied. It has been figured out that a tank with 2197 cubic feet liquid capacity can hold 15 million cubic feet of liquefied gas. The first liquid gas storage tank, at Cleveland, is surrounded by a three-foot thickness of cork insulation to maintain the temperature. Since steel becomes brittle at -250 degrees F., a special nickel steel was used.

**S**CIENTISTS, forever prodding deep into the facts of life, are still somewhat chagrined because the elephant continues to be the oldest animal now extant. Many scientists prefer the whale, but although some of these huge sea mammals are said to attain an age of several hundred years, there's no definite proof.

However, the common crow can outlive the pachyderm and even many species of turtles. The vicious-eyed vulture attains in some instances a longevity of 100 years. Geese and some parrots live to 70, while the ostrich, the largest bird, can keep going for a half century.

Which is enough to close the Observatory for another month. Don't forget our birthday! Rap

# THE PROPHECIES OF GIZEH

By JOSEPH T. MILLARD

**Author Millard's article in our January issue so intrigued our readers that we present here a new feature on the Gizeh Pyramid with additional facts about the mysterious edifice**

**A**LMOST from the beginning of written history, Man's imagination has been intrigued by the mystery of that greatest of all structures—the Great Pyramid of Gizeh. To sober-minded Egyptologists, the Great Pyramid was no more than an impressive tomb, built by King Cheops of Egypt to receive his mummy and that of his queen.

But a steadily growing number of Pyramidologists are gathering a mass of evidence to disprove all phases of the theory.

In the first place, when the Pyramid was entered for the first time by workmen of Al Momoun, Khalif of Arabia, in 800 A.D., there were no mummies, no royal treasures, no evidence of any kind showing burial. And the fact that the workmen had to quarry through an immense granite block to gain entrance, proved that no one before them had entered and looted the chambers.

Furthermore, the presence of *ventilating* shafts hardly points to its use as a tomb. Then, too, the bewildering, yet orderly, arrangement of tunnels and chambers seems to indicate hidden purposes beyond the normal.

An Arabian writer named Masoudi, wrote in the tenth century A. D. that: "Surid—one of the Kings of Egypt *before the flood*, built the two great pyramids.

"He also ordered the priests to deposit within them written accounts of their wisdom and acquirements in the different arts and sciences . . . the sciences of arithmetic and geometry, that they might remain as records for the benefit of those who could afterwards comprehend them.

"The King also deposited the positions of the stars and their cycles; together with the history and chronicle of time past, of that which is to come, and every future event which would take place in Egypt."

In a previous article, we have seen how amazingly the Great Pyramid reveals the innermost secrets of geometry, astronomy and the other sciences. Now let us see what research has brought to light concerning the Great Pyramid as a chronicle of world events and a prophet of future occurrences.

**C**OUNTING a Pyramidal Inch as one year (with a few allowances and exceptions decided upon by detailed study on the part of Pyramidologists, many of whom have been and are scholars and sci-

entists of note) the peculiar passages into the inner chambers of the Pyramid are made to reveal an amazing picture of events.

At intervals along the whole chain of passages are peculiar markers. These markers take various forms. In some cases, there are blocks of stone set into the floor, over which the visitor must step. In other places, the passageway suddenly rises or drops at a steep angle; the roof lowers until it is impossible to stand erect, then abruptly rises to the height of a two-story house. Blind passages lead off a distance and then end.

There is no conceivable reason for all these strange things unless they truly are markers to indicate important dates in history. But if they are markers, what world events can be discovered from their locations? Pyramidologists seek the answer by measuring the number of inches between markers and reading their answer in terms of years of history.\*

The first important marking, according to this method, falls upon the date 1486 B.C. Bear in mind that this date is more than a thousand known years after the construction of the Pyramid.

The year 1486 B.C. is the year given by ancient books and verified by scientific research as the date when the Children of Israel, under Moses, began their Exodus.

From this spot, the passage suddenly rises to a point corresponding with the exact date of April 7, A.D. On April 7, A.D., Christ was crucified.

**F**ROM this point, two passages extend. One, a horizontal passage, is interpreted as the history of our Biblical period. The passage ends in the so-called Queen's Chamber.

Another passage, rising upward, foretells the rise of the Christian world with amazing accuracy. Event after world event is located and accurately dated by markers in the passage.

According to interpretation of the prophecy, it is the age between 1558 A.D. and 2045 A.D. that mankind will begin to unlock the full secrets of the

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\* As stated in the previous article "The Mystery of the Pyramid" it is evident from several calculations embodied in Pyramidal measurements that the builders of that thirteen-and-a-half acre marvel knew the true length of the year, as selected by modern science, to within 30 seconds of absolute accuracy.—Ed.

**Pyramid.** The importance of the beginning date, 1558 A.D., strikes us when we see that that date coincides with the beginning of the Scientific Revolution when mankind shook off the blindfold of the Dark Ages and began to build the foundations of our modern science.

At the date of August 4-5, 1914, the Ascending Passage ends at a block of stone. This is the date when Great Britain entered the first World War.

From that date to one corresponding with November 11, 1918—the date of the Armistice ending the war—there is a horizontal passage whose ceiling is so low that visitors must practically crawl on hands and knees. Truly this was a low period in history for mankind.

From the date of the Armistice until May 29, 1928, the ceiling rises to a point where one can stand erect. This is the period of calm and reconstruction after the war.

Then from May, 1928, another Low Passage runs to the middle of September, 1936. This period coincides with the world-wide economic depression and the various smaller wars and uprisings that occurred in different parts of the world during that interval.

It is interesting to note that many other prophecies besides the Great Pyramid have all set the 15th or 16th of September, 1936, as the crucial date of some new step that will eventually change the world for the better. It is hard for us to see right now what that "new step" might have been or how the world, locked in a new carnage, has been bettered. But it is characteristic of prophecies that many times we completely overlook an apparently simple event and fail to realize its importance at the time.

**STRANGELY**, too, this date ushers in the old Hebrew Feast of the Trumpets and coincides with chronological calculations of Bible prophecies of the Old Testament as the end of the last Tribulation of Israel. That, too, is hard to see in the light of current affairs. But against the thousands of years of man's history, an error of a few years would not be unusual.

In 1936, this Low Passage leads into the King's Chamber and to what Pyramidologists interpret as a period of Cleansing of Nations, a time of deadly tribulation and strife. The dates of March

3-4, 1945 and February 18th, 1946 are marked for special importance but what will occur on those dates, we cannot guess.

However, the Chamber indicates a seventeen-year period until August 20, 1953, during which time an Armageddon of the Nations is to take place, from which Israel will emerge triumphant.

Following that period of agony, the world will go into a period of Reconstruction and growth that will last until September, 2001 A.D. At that time, the Pyramid prophecies a "Builder's Sabbath" or rest period when mankind will have reached a stage in its growth that will be the threshold of a new civilization and glory.

Beyond that, Pyramid prophecy does not go.

**WE** can believe or disbelieve the Prophecies of the Great Pyramid, as we prefer. But we cannot escape the almost miraculous way in which its revelations coincide with other written works of history and prophecy.

Nor can we explain the tremendous invisible significance that the Great Pyramid takes at times in our history. Why, for example, did the American Colonists on July 4th, 1776, suddenly adopt the picture of the Great Pyramid, surmounted by an all-seeing eye, as the central picture on the Seal of the new Republic?

And why did the Secretary of the Treasury, without warning or previous discussion, suddenly announce on June 15th, 1935, that henceforth this picture of the Great Pyramid of Gizeh, the so-called Bible In Stone, should appear on all American paper money?

What vast invisible force, of which the Great Pyramid is a symbol, has reached out to influence the minds of men through the ages? Is there a real force whose secret, like so many others, is locked in the six million tons of stone down near Gizeh, in Egypt?

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## ★ A GALAXY OF STARS ★

**The Gigantic May Issue Scintillates with Them!**

**Authors:** Such names as Don Wilcox, David Wright O'Brien, William P. Megivern, who in the past two years have rivaled the fame of Weinbaum, received the acclaim of Smith, Merritt, Talus, and Burroughs. And many others.

**Artists:** The finest oil painting J. Allen St. John has ever done for *Amazing Stories*; Frank R. Paul's most magnificent of all watercolors, showing an invasion from space; Julian S. Krupa's most inspired interior illustrations; Robert Fuqua, Jay Jackson, Joe Sewell, and brilliant cartoonists Dick Shaw, Guy Gifford, and R. Newman.

**Feature writers:** Joseph J. Millard, master of article writers; Henry Gade, space-tramping hobo who has seen all the planets and their wonders; and many others.

**DON'T FORGET**

## ★ NEXT MONTH IS OUR BIRTHDAY! ★

# Science Quiz

The following quiz has been prepared as a pleasant means of testing your knowledge of things scientific and pseudo-scientific. We offer it solely for the pleasure it gives you and with the hope that it will provide you with many bits of information that will help you to enjoy the stories in this magazine. If you rate 50% correct in your answers, you are considerably ahead of the average. Give yourself 2½ points for each correct answer.

## WEATHER FORECAST

*Other people may talk about the weather, but we're doing something about it. If you fill in the blank spaces below you'll derive some pertinent facts relative to the science of the atmosphere. Start right in now—but don't let the wind and the rain get in your hair!*

The science of the atmosphere, particularly in its relation to weather and climate, is known as ..... The atmosphere is a gaseous envelope, subject to the force of ....., lying on a spheroidal surface, of which three-fourths is ..... and one-fourth is ....., and on which this distribution is unsymmetrical. The atmosphere is affected directly and indirectly by solar .....

All weather processes depend ultimately on air-motion, i.e., wind, and wind naturally blows from regions of ..... barometric pressure to those of ..... pressure, but not directly. If pressure is set out on ..... the wind is almost parallel to them, but slightly inclined to the regions of low pressure.

Speed or wind is detected by the instrument called the .....; a speed of ..... miles per hour would cause damage to property. Wind force is ..... proportional to the distance between isobars.

On clear, still nights the ground radiates the ..... it has received during the daytime. Clouds covering the sky hinder the formation of ..... because they lessen radiation. If the condensation of the moisture of the air is not brought about by contact with cold solid objects at the surface of the earth, but by great masses of cold air high above the earth, ..... are formed and rain may result.

## TRUE OR FALSE

- (1) Mercury is so near the sun that it is comparatively seldom seen with the naked eye.....
- (2) Most comets are bright enough to be seen without a telescope .....
- (3) The velocity of all wave-lengths is the same in a vacuum.....
- (4) Everything in the universe can be classified as matter or energy .....
- (5) Plants are more important to geologists

than animals.....

(6) Palpitation of the heart is not a disease in itself.....

(7) The sun is losing its mass in the form of radiation.....

## SCRATCH OUT THE FALSE WORD

*One of the words do not belong in the following groups. Can you cross it out?*

1. AVIATION  
Aerostatics, Chromosphere, Amphibian, Ornithopter, Spad.
2. BOTANY  
Algae, Micropyle, Gemma, Stigma, Ammonal, Pappus.
3. CHEMISTRY  
Shims, Effervescence, Phenol, Precipitate, Mordants.
4. GEOLOGY  
Gumbo, Granitite, Mesa, Stalactite, Caribou, Delta.
5. MATHEMATICS  
Conic section, Quadric, Jiharo, Sine, Tangent.
6. METEOROLOGY  
Thermite, Aqueous vapor, Cirrus, Hoarfrost, Statoscope.
7. PHOTOGRAPHY  
Emulsion, Vignette, Panchromatic, Diaphragm, Amplitude.
8. ASTRONOMY  
Parsec, Bendix drive, Spectroheliograph, Cepheid, Nova.

## QUIZ WHIZ

1. What phenomenon of nature exhibits perfect streamlining?
2. Give two popular names for the glow worm.
3. How high is up?
4. Is the spider an insect?
5. Which month of the year was December, originally?
6. Who was Wednesday named after?
7. Name five varieties of citrus fruits
8. Which vessels carry the blood to the heart?
9. What is the approximate population of the Earth?
10. What happens to the boiling point in high altitudes?
11. What is the great similarity with ants and bees?
12. What happens when apple cider ferments?
13. Name the most rapid form of oxidation.
14. What do we call the "melting" of dry ice?
15. Name a popular drink made from part of an Oriental evergreen.

(Answers on page 142)

# Meet the Authors

NEIL R. JONES

PRIESTESS OF THE SLEEPING DEATH

**O**N the face of things, there doesn't seem to be a great deal to tell about me.

I live where I was born a good thirty years ago, in a small city of upstate New York near Lake Ontario. I commenced reading children's books at seven and in a year's time had graduated in startling contrast to Jesse James and Young Wild West novels. I could have been no older than nine at the most when I read my first science fiction story. I can't recall the author, but the title stands out from a mist of memory. It was "The Land of the Changing Sun," with a subterranean motif as its locale. If anybody can tell me the author of this book, let them speak up about it.

Not long after this, I came across "Tarzan of the Apes," and from then on I was an E. R. B. addict. His earlier writings were his best ones. Probably no other author I've read has had so great a part in forming my style and ideas.

Mark Twain claims that there are absolutely no new ideas conceived, but only an amalgamated complexity of transferred impressions welded with a new order. Both Ripley and Vincente Blasca Ibanez (in the latter's "Enemies of Women") have called attention to the billions of combinations into which 52 cards may be arranged. These astronomic totals suffer in comparison to Mark Twain's theory, I feel.

Another author who created a strong formative impression upon me was H. Rider Haggard whose "She" I read at a tender age, and at the time gave me as horrible a nightmare as one would care to have. Nevertheless, I consider that the best book I have ever read. Perhaps a bit of reminiscent sentiment may color this choice, so allow for that. I wonder how many readers of "She" are aware of the sequels, "Ayesha" and "Wisdom's Daughter." The last was written after the other two, I believe, yet it precedes the others in chronologic order. The

Author of

author believed so strongly in inspirational qualities that in writing "Ayesha" he allowed a generation to elapse after writing "She"—the same interval in the hero's life, I believe.

The creative impressions I received from these stories may be found in my numerous stories of the Durna Rangué cult. "Zyrma" (Priestess Of The Sleeping Death) is one of these.

A reader invariably is curious as to what an author whose stories he has read does in his spare time. How does he act? What kind of a creature is he?

I spend a good share of the time swimming in the summer. I live in the territory made famous by the pen of James Fenimore Cooper, and I occasionally follow the same Indian trails of his novels in nothing more than a pair of bathing tights and shoes.

I do quite a bit of ballroom dancing. I play baseball and softball in the warmer months, and in the winter I play basketball. At one time I was a fairly good pool player, but I haven't played much of late years, and one must constantly keep in practice at this.

Various games interest me. I play many card games, roulette and popular board games. In fact, I've let my imagination run riot in experimenting with

new ideas in the matter of game boards. I have one a friend of mine made me from my drawings, with inlaid wood. Another I laboriously engraved with an electric pencil. Accompanying paraphernalia is along the same painstaking lines.

Years ago I used to collect stamps, and I grew to dabble in them commercially, and from this sprang my first commercial writing, as I was paid in advertising space in the stamp magazines. My first efforts at literary creation, however, saw the light in the local high school yearbook.

My first large scale effort was "The Electrical Man" in a 1930 issue of "Scientific Detective

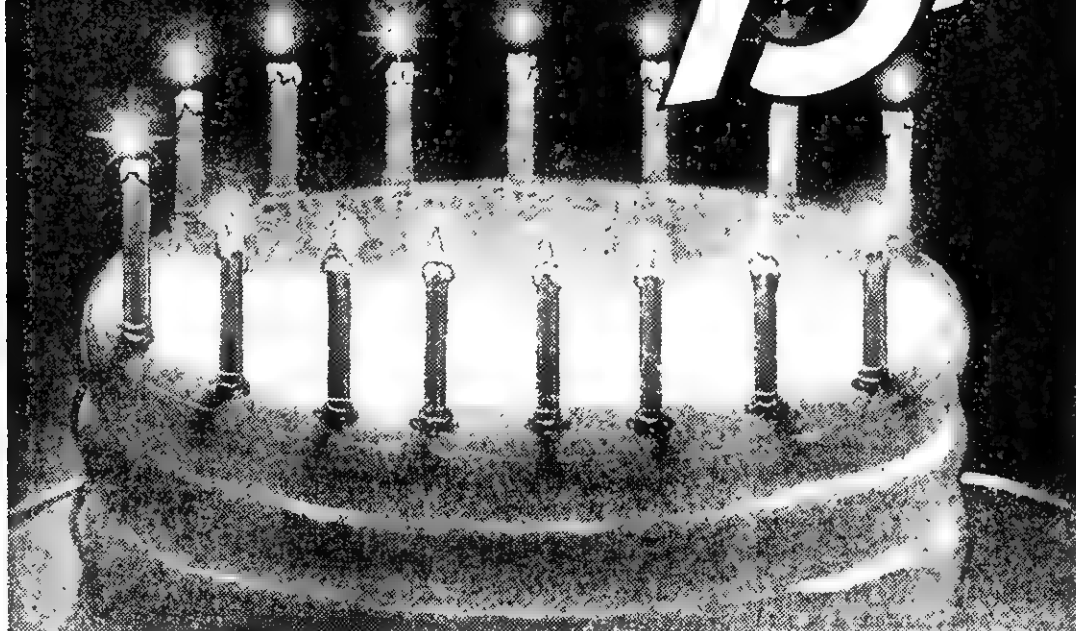
(Concluded on page 143)



NEIL R. JONES

# WE'RE CELEBRATING OUR

# 15<sup>th</sup>



## Don't Miss These GREAT STORIES!

★ **DICTAGRAPHS OF DEATH**—by P. F. Costello (Novel). Mr. Wu was just a little Oriental, but there was something fearsome about him... yes, and that something became a mighty force when the Dictagraphs of Death began recording their grim store of stolen knowledge... secret knowledge that left men with empty brains!

★ **TREASURE WORLD**—by Duncan Farnsworth (Short Novel). Three years of lonely toil were behind him, and now he was to return to Earth. But as he stepped out of his ship, armed guards closed in... and the traitor of a trusted friend meant a life sentence on a penal moon. What treacherous plot threatened civilization? What was the mystery of the lost planet?

★ **THE LOST AGES**—by Don Wilcox (Complete Novel). Three worlds lay side by side; the past, the present, the future. And through all three a man and a woman fought their way toward the final haven... that man, centuries denied them. Don't fail to read this thrilling story of inter-dimensional worlds!

★ **PLANTS THAT THINK**—by Joseph J. Millard (A Scientific Fantasy). A most amazing discovery of thinking plants. Is there really such a thing? Is there a plant world a world of intelligent beings with which we may someday exchange thoughts? What activates the strangely deliberate actions of the Venus Fly Trap?

★ **THE MAN WHO FORGOT**—by John York Cabot (Novel). When the raiders boarded Johnny Durand's space ship, he saw a light that was burned into his mind... his comrades were burned down horribly at his side, but then he forgot. And it meant disgrace and shame, and the life of a fugitive, until he remembered again...

★ **THE FATE OF ASTEROID 13**—by William P. McGivern (Short). Philip Trent, Federation Agent, found something distinctly fishy on Asteroid 13—while he had become a potential death trap for every living being on it. Yet they were forced to remain to face destruction, as slaves of a great corporation, until Trent traded places with them.

★ **LONE WOLF OF SPACE**—by A. R. Stober (Short Novel). Almost legendary was the reputation of Sargent Martin Brand, the Lone Wolf Musketeer of the void. On the moon, Earth's first line of defense against marauding Mars, he fought a lone fighter's battle to thrust back the armed forces of a war mad planet. He laughed at Death, and Death laughed back... all because of a woman whose love had turned to hatred.

★ **WAR BETWEEN THE WORLDS**—by Frank R. Paul and Wallace Quitman (Back cover feature and article). What will the space war of the future be? Read the prophetic article of a future possibility a raid on New York by space ships from Mars. Painted in full color by science fiction's top artist on the back cover!

**AND OTHER THRILLING TALES** and articles by Miles

Shelton, Alexander Blade, Joseph J. Millard, and Wallace Quitman!

# ANNIVERSARY

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# 19

## GREAT SCIENCE FICTION STORIES REISSUED FROM

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# DISCUSSIONS



**AMAZING STORIES** will publish in each issue a selection of letters from readers. Everybody is welcome to contribute. Bouquets and brickbats will have an equal chance. Inter-reader correspondence and controversy will be encouraged through this department. Get in with the gang and have your say.

## WE'LL SAY WE ARE!

Sirs:

My rating of the January issue:

- (1) John Carter And The Giant of Mars—A
- (2) The Armageddon of Johann Schmidt—A
- (3) The Invisible Wheel of Death—B
- (4) Mystery Moon -B
- (5) Skidmore's Strange Experiment—C
- (6) Hammer Of The Gods—C

St. John's front cover and Paul's back cover were perfect.

Question Are you celebrating your fifteenth anniversary? Thanks for a lot of good reading.

A. L. Schwartz,  
229 Washington St.,  
Dorchester, Mass.

*Are we celebrating our fifteenth anniversary? We should say so? Just turn to page 130, and you'll find out how!—Ed.*

## 5-STAR FICTION

Sirs:

Just finished the February issue with Don Wilcox's "Battering Rams of Space", a five-star \*\*\*\*\* piece of science fiction if there ever was one. As good as "The Voyage That Lasted 600 Years", but in another way.

Also taking a Blue Ribbon is John York Cabot's "The Last Analysis." Adam Link poor. Other stories didn't appeal.

Abraham Radden,  
1541—55th St.,  
Brooklyn, N. Y.

*It seems Don Wilcox will never write a "lemon." He seems able to ring the bell every time. This story already has brought demands for a third in the series.—Ed.*

## EARTHQUAKES?

Sirs:

Your comment on the "earthquakes" in Rumania startled me. I had the same idea—but then

I am given to thinking of implications and following them to a logical conclusion. Those are very odd "earthquakes" indeed.

Moreover, such an effect would require only that a small group of men have the opportunity, the nerve, to take the chances involved—and the technical skill to get away with it. If the casing of a well was shattered just below the "tap rock" and the oil pipe was out of the way, a tube of . . . say copper . . . could be coiled loosely (like a corkscrew) and used to flow nitroglycerine down into the oil pool.

Just *what* could the conquering armies do with

oil pools "spiked" with tremendous quantities of "soup?" Put new pipes into the casings and operate 'em? Hmmm! Then comes the "earthquake!" Nitro strikes down . . . the impact would center about 100 miles down. Interesting chap! I'd like to know you.

George H. Foster,  
Stoughton, Mass.

*The feeling is mutual, Mr. Foster. If ever you hit Chicago, drop in on the Editors of AMAZING STORIES. We like to talk about things like this.—Ed.*

## NO DUD

Sirs:

I have read only four issues of your AMAZING STORIES, and I find them very interesting. They have convinced me that your magazine is no dud.

I like your short stories very much. Especially the one by David Wright O'Brien. Please have more of that length. I just eat 'em up.

I like your double covers. The idea seems to lend to the fact that it is a good magazine

William Lincoln,  
P. O. Box 70,  
Cullman, Alabama.

*We have more short stories coming up. There's one by William P. McGivern in this issue. And O'Brien has penned several more, even better than his last.—Ed.*



"Waddya mean, horticulture? I'm inventing a deadly new gas for the U. S. War Department."

## HURRAH FOR PAUL

Sirs:

The new Paul series are excellent plus The front cover was excellent too. Best story was John Carter and the Giant of Mars. Keep up the good articles. More like the Pyramid Mystery, if you please.

ALBERT BETTS,  
18 Wascana Avenue,  
Toronto, Ontario,  
Canada.

## RETURNS AFTER TWO YEARS

Sirs:

It has been two years and over since I have written a letter of commendation to you, the editors of AMAZING STORIES. However, congratulations are indeed due you after the January issue which started the year of 1941 off with a resounding B-A-N-G!

I don't know how one can describe Paul's back cover other than saying it is the most realistic scene which has ever graced a magazine of fantastic or non-fantastic atmosphere. A friend of mine said that he was equally carried off by its grace and adept style of realism. The front cover: it was grand, too. J. Allen St. John is a fortu-

nate gift to us readers. For years we have paid about two dollars to see a book graced with his inimitable style, but now—one has the chance of reveling in that great artist's technique much oftener for only a mere 20 cents. I was glad to see his art decorate the Mars story for only he can lend the same atmosphere as does the author.

That is another good point: the presentation of Edgar Rice Burroughs to us lovers of science-fiction. For years Mr. Burroughs' was the only author's works I read in the realm of sf literature, and he has long been a favorite of mine. I would gladly have paid the price of the magazine if only he had been present within the pages. Then you surprise us once more by rounding off the setting with swell supporting tales. Edmond Hamilton's "Mystery Moon" easily placed second above the rest of the field. Then, because of the adept handling of the situation in so few words, "Skidmore's Strange Experiment" shoved David Wright O'Brien right up into third spot. The rest of the stories were so equally matched that I couldn't decide which was the better of the lot.

One more thing: keep up those splendid articles! I say, with no hesitation, that I have never read a more interesting article in your pages than

# DEATH WALKS IN WASHINGTON



OSCAR, Detective of Mars, was the strangest creature ever seen on Earth . . . but the lovable little fellow wasn't half as strange as the ghastly figure that stalked murderously out of nowhere to challenge Oscar to a deadly duel of wits! Don't miss *Death Walks in Washington* . . . a great, thrill-packed novelet by James Norman. Read how Oscar, of the tulip nose and comical ears, pits his Martian cunning against deadly zombies. You'll find this grand story beginning on page 50 of the

**BIG MARCH ISSUE**



## 6 OTHER GREAT STORIES—including:

- ★ **LAVES OF THE FISH MEN** A complete Novel by Edgar Rice Burroughs. What chilling fate awaited Carson of Venus and the lovely Princess Duare among the fish people?
- ★ **THE THOUGHT ROBOT**—by John York Cabot. Incredibly sensitive was the robot's mind—because it could catch commands from the subconscious.
- ★ **BEYOND THE TIME DOOR** by David Wright O'Brien. Mike Cardoni sat in the chair, waiting for death's voltage . . . instead came a ray from the future!
- ★ **SECRET OF THE STONE DOLL**—A novelet by Don Wilcox. There was a fantastic reason for the strange pilgrimage that lay between those two and happiness!

**fantastic  
ADVENTURES**

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the latest "Scientific Mystery" More, more, and then some more, please!

Your departments are always high in interest and quality, your editorial being unique and the science quiz more original than any other, no matter which was started first. Keep the correspondence corner and discussions as lively as ever, especially the latter with your comments.

I end with only one plea—more of the same *plus* a little of Julian Krupa's old style.

JOE J. FORTIER,  
Member  
Golden Gate  
Cometeers.

*Glad to have you back in Discussions, Joe. And with such positive opinions. We kinda like to give you a "sock" once in awhile that makes you come out of hibernation. Joe Millard will be pleased to know he's written his way into the readers' hearts as no other article writer ever did. But he's coming up soon with some fiction—one story being an interplanetary that'll sizzle right in your ice-box! We'll tell Julian Krupa about using his old style . . . or maybe we'll just let him read this; he thinks he's improved!—Ed.*

#### "STEAMED UP"

Sirs:

Once again John Carter speeds across the dead sea bottoms of ancient Mars on his giant toat, and the ring of his sword on the steel of his enemies is music to my ears.

It has been over a year since I've written to you, but I couldn't resist the urge to send to you and AMAZING my thanks for bringing back my favorite science fiction character. You also deserve an orchid for getting St. John to illustrate the story for you. His cover is magnificent, and I don't believe any other artist could portray the spirit and atmosphere of Burroughs' writings as does St. John.

Your mention in the Observatory of more Burroughs' yarns to come was welcome, to say the least, and I shall be steamed up with anticipation of his next story to reach print in your magazine. How about getting him to do some more of those center-of-the-earth tales he used to write? I feel sure they'd be well received by the fans.

By the way, the story "John Carter and the Giant of Mars" was up to Burroughs' usual standard, and that, in my opinion, is all that need be said for it.

Here's hoping for more of the same in the near future.

Russell E. Powell,  
Southern Pines, N. C.

*We already have David Innes, from Pellucidar, which is that "center-of-the-earth" you mention. First of four novels about him will appear in AMAZING STORIES soon. But first we will finish presenting the John Carter series, which still has three more stories to go. The third of the series appears in June, the fourth in August, and the last in October.—Ed.*

# STAY a wage-slave IF you wish BUT-

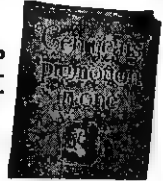
**DON'T** you wish you were like some of your friends who are forging ahead while you stay put? Like it or not, people size you up by what you earn. Is their sizing flattering to you? —Why not *plan* to get ahead, to make more money, to get a raise? If you don't know how, perhaps we can aid you as we have so many others. Chances are good that we can help you *boost yourself up* in ways you never thought of. —Thousands will gladly tell you how our planned training helped them—directed their work along *charted* paths to business success, bigger earnings, 10%, 20%, 50%, some even 100% and 200% greater income . . . At any rate, let us send you the inspiring book "Ten Years' Promotion in One." It's FREE! It will surely help you *plan* your next raise whether you ask us to *help* you plan or not. Write us today for the book—the coupon is for your convenience.

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## WE ARE "IN WRONG!"

Sirs:

This is the first time I've ever had reason to find serious fault with AMAZING STORIES. I don't know where the fault lies, but some one is certainly in wrong.

I buy and read all science fiction magazines, and AMAZING has always been one of my old favorites. I'm especially fond of Eando Binder's Adam and Eve Link. Whenever any of their adventures have been published, I've always made it a point to read their story first. When the February number came out, I naturally turned right to the page of "Adam Link in the Past," when lo and behold, I found I was reading practically the same story I had read in the January number of (censored).

Page 72 AMAZING had *Loki* with a patch on his eye, and Odin, a handsome soldier on Page 75. Yet it was *Loki* who was handsome and treacherous, and Odin, the king, who had lost his eye. (And (censored) forgot the patch on Odin's eye, too!). Of course, these can be called misprints. But the whole story was too similar to be of real interest.

What I want to know is did Binder just happen to choose the same theme to write about? Or is Ziff-Davis doing a little "borrowing of ideas" to hand their so-called authors??

I'll be franker still and state (censored) story far surpassed Binder's even with the beloved Link as the star.

I hope AMAZING will keep its high standard of good stories, and with no evidence of "snitching", as that sort of thing will create the wrong impression of a grand magazine.

Ginger Zwick,  
Box 284,  
Just-a-Mere Farm,  
Orchard Park, N. J.

Last August, your editor, Eando Binder, Robert Moore Williams, Jack West, Mortimer Q. Weisinger, and a couple other authors drove to Milwaukee to attend a fiction meeting. On the way back, your editor suggested that Adam Link go back into the past, say to the Norse Gods, and investigate the old legends of Thor, and find out that Thor was a robot, and that robot was himself. Naturally, Binder wrote the story, but the idea was received direct from your editors.

Therefore, we, and certainly Binder, ought to have reason to feel that such an accusation as you make should be answered. If you knew anything about publishing a magazine, you would realize that a February issue (on the stands in our case a month earlier than usual) could not possibly copy a January story in any other magazine. It would have already been off the presses.

Binder gave the bibliography of his source material. Isn't it natural that the same source would contain the same errors you mention?

Coincidence? Well, STRANGER things have happened! Any author can tell you that his greatest bane is conceiving an idea, then seeing it appear in print before he can finish it. Maybe there's

something to this mental telepathy thing at that!"—Ed

### LEO MOREY MAKES GOOD!

Sirs:

Now I can understand why Charles Hidley has been howling for Leo Morey. I personally never did care much for Morey, but that February cover changed my mind.

Adam Link's adventure in the past is Binder's best since "I, Robot." The idea of Thor isn't too far-fetched, if that epilogue was on the level.

Don Wilcox can always be relied upon for a good yarn. Although "Battering Rams of Space" was not as good as Wilcox's original story "Slave Raiders From Mercury"; it was still very good. If sequels are in order, how about "Ben Glead"?

Gordon Giles' short is worth mentioning. Wonder how a blackout would look on another planet?

David Glazer,  
12 Fowler St  
Dorchester, Mass.

"Ben Glead, the King of Speed", is coming back soon. We have a yarn on hand about the further adventures in "The Super City."—Ed.

### OSCAR OF MARS

Sirs:

I have just read the Adam Link story in the February issue of AMAZING STORIES. It is the best story you've ever published.

I'm only 15, but I've been reading science fiction for 3 years. Your companion magazine is swell too.

How about more "Oscar of Mars," "Horsensense Hank" and "Lancelot Biggs" stories?

Elliot Schneider,  
513 Ranton Ave,  
Highland Park, N. J.

You'll see an ad about "Oscar of Mars" on page 136.—Ed.

### HE RATES 'EM ALL!

Sirs:

I started reading AMAZING with the November issue, and I think it's a swell magazine. The November stories I classify in the following order:

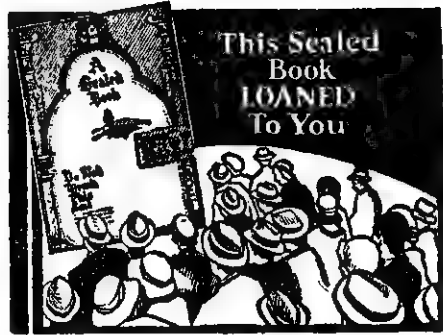
- (1) "Revolt on the Tenth World."
- (2) "The Scientific Pioneer Returns."
- (3) "West Point, 3000 A.D."
- (4) "Hell Ship of Space."
- (5) "The Achilles Heel."

December stories are as follows:

- (1) "Priestess of the Moon"
- (2) "West Point, 3000 A.D."
- (3) "Three Wise Men of Space."
- (4) "Adam Link Fights a War."
- (5) "The Visible Invisible Man."

January yarns rate as follows:

- (1) "John Carter and the Giant of Mars."
- (2) "Mystery Moon."
- (3) "Skidmore's Strange Experiment"
- (4) "The Invisible Wheel of Death."
- (5) "Hammer of the Gods."
- (6) "The Armageddon of Johann Schmidt."



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February stories rate:

- (1) "The Stillwell Degravitator."
- (2) "Adam Link in the Past"
- (3) "Battering Rams of Space."
- (4) "The Winking Lights of Mars."
- (5) "The Last Analysis."

Can't say for "The Accidental Murders" as I haven't read that.

One guy said there ought to be more fans under 14. I'm one, being only 9.

Artist Paul's "Cities on Other Worlds" is great, especially "A City on Jupiter!"

Richard Earnhart,  
450T Pershing Dr.,  
El Paso, Tex

## "BATTERING RAMS" FIRST

Sirs:

In your February issue, Battering Rams takes first place, with Adam Link running a close second. Third is Winking Lights, and Professor Stilwell is fourth. Cabot and Williams are tied for fifth place.

Your front cover rates B plus, and the back cover is A. Best pic is Krupa's for Battering Rams, and worst is Jackson's for "The Last Analysis."

Cartoons, as usual, were good, as were the departments.

Professor Stilwell, I'm ashamed of you! You don't know who Pythagoras is. Tsk, tsk. (See Page 130.)

I disagree with D. B. Thompson. Your stories are good. Your short stories are also good. (And I don't like most shorts.)

Here's hoping "Doc" Smith stops thinking of a new "Skylark" and writes it.

A. L. Schwartz,  
229 Washington St.,  
Dorchester, Mass.

*Looks like our covers are beginning to rate pretty high. Well, wait'll you see the covers for May, and for June!—Ed.*

## POET LAUREATE

Sirs:

I won't bore you with criticisms or the usual line that most guys hand out. I'm of the opinion that most of the guys that gripe and complain, do so just to give the world the idea they're tough.

After I read "Adam Link in the Past", I was both puzzled and interested. So—down to the library I went. Looked up all the old Norse legends I could find, and won't wonders cease? For the description of Thor just fits Adam Link. Do you wonder why I'm still wondering?

It was a damned good story (pardon my swearing, but I'll swear a blue streak at the guy who says it ain't). It sorta made a guy stop and think of those mysterious happenings in those old legends.

You can depend on me to buy, read and hoard your swellegant mags., AMAZING STORIES, *Fantastic Adventures*, the two most complete and best-printed mags. in the SF world.

Y'see, most of the other SF (pulp) are ragged,

small type, poor grade of paper, or have stories but no plots to them. Ho—hum—

But—when I open your mag. I just know there'll be adventure in the air, and God help the guy that disturbs me.

I've got a habit of reading the mag. cover to cover at one sitting (tch-tch-bad) 'cause after I'm done, I cuss you for not havin' a double feature.

Oh, well, that's life for you, I guess. If we all take what we get and be satisfied it would be a lot nicer world to live in

I've read your mag., ol' boy

And think it was swell

It brought me plenty o' joy,

For it certainly rung the bell

(original, not facsimile)

Ruben Larsen,

1113 Tappan Street,

Woodstock, Ill.

Accept our original, not facsimile, thanks for your kind letter. We hope you get plenty o' additional joy out of this and future issues.—Ed

### BEST YET!

Sirs:

Congratulations on your best issue yet! It was really swell; no foolin'! Don't make the next better, because I might faint for joy.

The front cover was truly marvelous, and clearly shows that Morey, when he feels like it, is second only to Paul as a SF illustrator (small, weak voice inquired, hopefully, "Any chance of getting the cover illustration *without* lettering?" "Nope," ye editor replies cheerfully). Paul's back cover was also fine. In fact, I think it's one of his very best.

And the stories! Two excellent, three good, and one—oh, you cruel, cruel thing. Why such a story in an otherwise perfect issue—one punk story. The punk story I am referring to is none other than that super epic, that heroic saga, the incomparable "Battering Rams of Space", Junk!

By far the best parts of your mag. are The Editor's Notebook and the back cover. Scientific Mysteries, Meet the Authors, Science Quiz (I got 92½ this time, whoopee!), and Discussions are also good. I wish to say right now that the untrimmed edges don't bother me a bit, because I have an efficient method (well, I think it is, anyway) of trimming them myself. All persons interested will kindly send three second-hand force screens for full details.

You know, it's a funny thing. I don't consider AMAZING STORIES the best mag. on the market ("Oh, shucks!" says ye ed), but, paradoxically enough, I get more enjoyment out of it than any other being issued right now.

Leonard Marlow,  
5809 Beechwood Ave.,  
Indianapolis, Ind.

P.S. Thanks for that *beeyotiful* check for second prize. Somewhat belated thanks, but I hope better late than never.

Well, you already had the check, so we must assume this letter is straight goods! But dang it,

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man, you being smart enough to win a prize, and you disagree with so many of our readers about Battering Rams? How come? We get a secret enjoyment out of your statement that we aren't the best on the market, but that we give more enjoyment than any other. Ha! That's what we've been TRYING to do!—Ed.

### HE'S SORRY—AND RIGHTLY!

Sirs:

I missed the January issue of AMAZING STORIES with "John Carter and the Giant of Mars" and am I sorry!!

I haven't been reading SF very long; in fact, only a few months, but I can tell you AMAZING STORIES is absolutely the best out! A-1!

I liked "West Point, 3000 A.D." by Manly Wade Wellman, but I didn't like it in a serial. I don't like to read half of a story and then wait a month to read the other half. Until John Carter comes

out in March, an AMAZING STORIES fan,

Richard Salmon,

123 Lift St.,

Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio

*Our May issue will contain two complete novels which we would otherwise have run in serial form. But it's our birthday, see, and we're celebrating!*  
—Ed.

### GILES ON THE PAN

Sirs:

To begin with, I might tell you that I am only twelve years old and have been reading SF mags for years (never miss an issue of AMAZING or Fantastic).

Before I go any farther, I want to tell you that the "Winking Lights of Mars" was *ROTTEN!!* I will be tempted to discontinue reading this magazine if you print any more like that. What I want to know is, what were the winking lights?

The cover was terrible! If there is one thing I detest is a cover depicting space ships in combat, or just plain space ships. How about Paul, Krupa, and Fuqua on the cover?

All the adjectives in the dictionary couldn't voice my praise of the back cover. Keep up the good work.

More time travel stories and less romance, please.

Joan Carmell,  
7641 Essex Ave.,  
Chicago, Ill

*How these girls slap us around! Well, Joan, we can take it. To answer your question, the winking lights were cities, the lights of which twinkled, or winked, with the effect of the air currents in Earth's atmosphere. Thus, when the war's black-outs came, the winking lights went out. You ask for Paul on the front cover. Well, wouldn't he be the most logical artist to put a space ship there? And you detest 'em. Oh, my!—Ed.*

THE END

## QUIZ ANSWERS

(Quiz on page 130)

## WEATHER FORECAST

Meteorology, gravity, water, land, radiation, high, low, isobars, anemometer, 40, inversely, heat, dew, clouds.

## TRUE OR FALSE

- (1) True.
- (2) False.
- (3) True.
- (4) True.
- (5) False.
- (6) True.
- (7) True.

## SCRATCH OUT THE FALSE WORD

1. Chromosphere
2. Ammonal
3. Shims

4. Caribou
5. Jiharo
6. Thermite
7. Amphitude
8. Bendix drive

### QUIZ WHIZ

1. The raindrop
2. Lightning-bug and fire-fly.
3. The limit of gravitation.
4. No
5. Tenth
6. Woden
7. Lemon, orange, grapefruit, lime, citron.
8. Veins
9. Two billion
10. It decreases
11. Their social systems.
12. It becomes vinegar.
13. Fire
14. Sublimation.
15. Tea

### MEET THE AUTHORS

(Concluded from page 131)

Monthly." I still have a sequel to it in "The Limehouse Dope Mystery," written just before the magazine was discontinued. "The Death's Head Meteor" in the January, 1930 issue of "Air Wonder Stories" was my first appearance on the big time although it was written some months after "The Electrical Man."

I have done quite a bit of bookbinding both in leather and cloth, confining this almost entirely to science fiction. I have a complete set of AMAZING STORIES from the beginning.

Probably the best piece of illustrating ever done for any of my work was Paul's inside illustration for "The Asteroid of Death" in the Fall, 1932 issue of "Wonder Stories Quarterly." I liked it so well that I spent twenty-five hours in reproducing it on the back of an athletic sweat shirt, with pens and seven colors of waterproof ink, enlarging the original four times. Incidentally, the front of this same sweat shirt is decorated with a machine man, a rocket ship and the planet Saturn.

I read a great deal. I liked "Anthony Adverse" as one of the best books I've ever read and was regretful that there was not more of it. At present, I am reading something by Charles Dickens, whom I admire greatly. His faculties for characterization seem so far out of reach of the writers of today as to be almost phenomenal. I wonder how many readers have come across what appears to be a bit of science fiction in "Bleak House" where a man burns up from spontaneous combustion, yet Dickens in a preface claims this to have actually happened.

I have written two novels, "The Cosmic Veil," of 70,000 words, and "The Outlawed World," of 93,000 words. These lengths are but rarely employed in the science fiction magazines today. The latter I consider my best work.—Neil R. Jones.

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# A CITY ON URANUS

By HENRY GADE

**Metalis, huge underground city of Uranus, is here described in imaginative story form, based on scientific facts we know of this world through observation. See painting on back cover.**

**D**ID I ever tell you of the time I worked out of Metalis, the metal city of Uranus, for Interplanetary Metals, Inc.? That was the only job I ever had that I liked—as well as I could enjoy anything that smacked of physical servitude!—and I held it for two years. I majored in metallurgy and it was a cinch for me. Maybe I'd have been rich today, if I'd followed it, but I like travel too much. There's a lot to see in this old solar system, and I want to see it all before I die.

Well, Metalis is a mighty interesting city, and to an Earthman, it's something of a perpetual amusement park, with super roller-coasters. Yes, that's what it could be called—the Roller-coaster City! It's literally a city on little metal wheels that zoom up and down breathtaking metal causeways like a roller-rink gone mad.

But let's describe the city from a visual standpoint. First, like most cities on the giant worlds, it is underground. The atmosphere of Uranus is unbreathable, and artificial atmosphere plants provide air for the cities.

Metalis is over five miles underground, and it is connected with the surface of Uranus by long tunnel-like tubes, traversed by pneumatic cars that open into surface-strata caverns. Access to the outside is through air-lock trap doors.

The people of Metalis rarely venture on the surface, except at space ports, and at ventilating outlets.

When you catch your first glimpse of the city proper, the impression is one of huge mechanical perfection, and Metalis seems to be a city of robots, mounted on roller skates, who continually swoop up and down metal ramps with dizzying speed. But they aren't robots. All Uranians are rather delicate creatures, paradoxically, perhaps because of their ancient and perfected civilization, and they are encased in metal machines in which they virtually spend all of their lives without emerging.

The city is constructed mostly of huge buildings that have an air of the cathedral about them. They are vast open spaces, crossed by ramps, and lined on both sides by tiers of living quarters, factories, and laboratories. The various levels possess unbreakable glass roadways along which pedestrians skate with unbelievable speed on their electric-powered skates.

Always most fascinating to me has been the

way these machine-clad people traverse the ramps, especially the very steep inclines. Their skates are highly magnetic, and can cling, brake, or simply roll, at will, under the manipulation of the operator. They swoop down almost vertical slopes with scarcely a variation in speed, and they climb up with the same effortless ease.

Not all of the Uranians have the same sort of metal body-machine. There are many kinds, adapted to various tasks. Metalis is a highly specialized city, and its people are perhaps more specialized than an ant city.

Rising through the center of these great buildings are the heating and ventilating towers, which top great electric atmosphere machines and electric air-heaters. These columns are in reality great radiators with louvres which distribute heat and air and constant temperature. In a metal city such as this, a constant temperature insures against strains and stresses due to expansion and contraction of metals.

The city is lighted by permanently installed radium lights which break down several elements into all the radiations necessary to preserve perfect health. Ultra-violet, infra-red, and radio-active waves continually bathe the whole city in precisely measured quantities.

The entire construction of the city is metal and glass, and it is always spotlessly gleaming and polished. Robot mechanisms remove every speck of dust and debris. The continual stream of traffic up and down the ramps makes of them gleaming silver bands that reflect the light.

Metalis gets its metals from deep underground fire-pits, which are made accessible by tremendous wells dug down to the magma core of the planet, and kept under tremendous gas-pressure. Any desired metal can be drawn from valves on demand, in a purity of form that needs little smelting.

Outside these huge buildings is the weirdest landscape to be seen on any planet in the solar system. It is a scene almost from Dante's *Inferno*. Forbidding metal-and-rock caverns, lit with the ruddy glare of the fire-pits' safety outlets to the surface. Uranus has occasional quakes that sometimes cause increased pressure in the metal wells, and safety valves expel the magma to the surface with magnificent displays of pyrotechnics.

Yes, Metalis is an impressive city to see, and I don't regret the two years I spent there.

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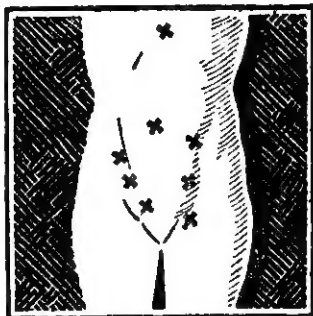
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# A CITY ON URANUS

**Metalis, the amazing metal and glass city of the Seal Men of Uranus. Read its story on page 144**

